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ABSTRACT

It is the intent of this Master's Thesis to describe the nonstandard morphology and syntax of a representative sample of children in the Norfolk City schools. The description is organized according to the linguistic patterning of nonstandard English features and their social and ethnic distribution. The speech of both white and Negro children is considered in the interest of clarifying the question of ethnic stratification of dialect features. The research methodology is described, and a discussion of isolated features follows; such features include the zero-copula, invariant "be," third person singular present tense verbs, past forms of the verb, negation, plural formation, pronouns, and questions. The study concludes with implications for future research and pedagogical considerations. The distribution patterns that emerge from the study indicate that most nonstandard features occur in Norfolk in the speech of whites as well as of Negroes. The dialect variations seem to be regional rather than social. The appendixes include the data collection forms and the dialect study questionnaire used in the research. (Author/VH)

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NON-STANDARD ENGLISH IN NORFOLK CITY SCHOOLS

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A thesis presented to the Department of English of
Old Dominion University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in English

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to describe non-standard morphology and syntax of a representative sample of children in the Norfolk City Schools. The description is organized according to the linguistic patterning of non-standard English features and their social and ethnic distribution.

The study of non-standard English among children in Norfolk City Schools is, in part, a response to court-ordered desegregation of the public school system. The newly-implemented heterogeneous mixing of children from varied social and ethnic backgrounds has created new problems for classroom teachers untrained in teaching Standard English to disadvantaged children whose language is non-standard. Recognizing the pedagogical dilemma and attempting to remedy it, Norfolk City Schools applied for and received a grant of Emergency School Assistance (ESA) funds from the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The present study was undertaken in cooperation with the Norfolk City Schools ESA Social Dialects Project for the purpose of defining and describing non-standard features of the English of Norfolk school-children.

A study of non-standard English among children in Norfolk City Schools was considered desirable for several reasons. First of all, no field work in non-standard (or even standard) dialects in Norfolk had yet been undertaken. Secondly, an actual sample of local speech is necessary for defining and describing the varieties of English that

occur in Norfolk, even though studies of non-standard English in other parts of the country suggest the non-standard features likely to occur here. Thirdly, an indication of the relative social and ethnic distribution of the various non-standard language features is needed to point out the items which are most socially stratified and which should, therefore, become targets for special attention in the classroom. Fourthly, and most important, since traditional teaching methods have not been found to be entirely successful in imparting a working knowledge of Standard English to speakers of non-standard dialects, the results of the study may be used as a foundation for improving pedagogical strategies.

In addition to the practical considerations of providing a description of non-standard English to the Norfolk City Schools, there is also a theoretical justification for a study of non-standard speech among the total school population in Norfolk, whites as well as Negroes. Studies of non-standard English over the last decade have focused almost entirely on the speech of Negroes in northern urban centers.¹ Much attention has been given to non-standard Negro English, but its relationship to Southern varieties of Standard English has not yet been clarified.

¹Several book-length studies and a multitude of articles have been published on the non-standard English of Negroes. Among the books and monographs are Edmund A. Anderson's A Grammatical Overview of Baltimore Non-standard Negro English (Baltimore: Center for the Study of Social Organization of Schools for The Johns Hopkins University, 1970); Walter A. Wolfram's A Sociolinguistic Description of Detroit Negro Speech (Washington: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1969); and Juanita V. Williamson's The Speech of Negro High School Students in Memphis, Tennessee (Washington: U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education; ERIC Document ED 021 210, 1968.)

The Detroit, Chicago and Washington Dialect Studies have included white informants, but most of the articles derived from these studies have concentrated on Negro dialects; the same is true of William Labov's studies in New York City. (A listing of the major articles is included in the bibliography.)

Walt Wolfram, for instance, remarks that "in a Northern locale, some features which are acceptable Southern speech patterns have been transformed into class and ethnic patterns."² Wolfram and Ralph Fasold have indicated that "Negro dialect shares many features with other kinds of English. Its distinctiveness, however, lies in the fact that it has a number of . . . features which are not shared by other dialects."³ A whole body of literature has been produced on the subject of non-standard Negro English, or "Black English,"⁴ despite the outcry of such linguists as Raven I. McDavid⁵ and Juanita Williamson,⁶ who view the features of "Black English" as legitimate regional variations of the language. In light of the current controversy about the non-standard English of Negroes, the present study includes the speech of both white and Negro children in the interest of clarifying the question of ethnic stratification of dialect features.

²Walt Wolfram, "Sociolinguistic Implications for Educational Sequencing," in Ralph W. Fasold and Roger W. Shuy, eds., Teaching Standard English in the Inner City (Washington: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1970), p. 113.

³Walt Wolfram and Ralph W. Fasold, "Some Linguistic Features of Negro Dialect," Teaching Standard English in the Inner City, pp. 41-42.

⁴The state of the field in non-standard Negro English is summarized in my article, "Black English: Problematic but Systematic," South Atlantic Bulletin, 34 (May, 1971), 38-46.

⁵According to McDavid, the American caste system is responsible for a skewing of the statistical variation between non-standard Negro speech and white speech, standard or non-standard. See Raven I. McDavid, Jr., "American Social Dialects," College English, XXVI (January, 1965), p. 258, n. 7.

⁶Juanita Williamson's The Speech of Negro High School Students concludes by describing the non-standard speech of Negroes in terms of characteristic Southern speech (p. 79). Her latest article on the similarities of the speech of white and black Southerners is "Selected Features of Speech: Black and White," CLA Journal, XIII (June, 1970), 420-33.

The Sample

Forty informants were selected in such a manner as to constitute the minimum statistically reliable random sample of the public school population.⁷ Informants included natives and non-natives of both sexes and several races, since the study is concerned with the language of the actual school population. Informants were drawn from first, sixth, eighth, and tenth grade classes in nine schools. Permission to visit the schools for the field study was arranged by the administrators of the Norfolk City Schools, who also determined which schools were to be visited.

In each of the nine schools, one class was selected at random, and the sample was drawn at random from the roll sheets of that class. All classes from which the sample was drawn were regular classes (that is, not modified, advanced, or special classes). In each of the two senior high schools, five informants were drawn from one tenth-grade English class; in the junior high school, six students were similarly selected from a regular eighth-grade English class. Two of the elementary schools contained both first and sixth grades, and from these one class at each grade level was selected. Four of the elementary schools included only the first through third grades or fourth through sixth but were "paired" so that the first and sixth graders in the pair of schools were drawn from the same neighborhood populations. Three informants were drawn from one first-grade class and three from one sixth-grade class in each of the schools represented. The sample, then, was distributed as follows:

⁷Jean Holton, Assistant Professor of Mathematics at Old Dominion University, served as consultant for statistical procedure in the present study.

Secondary	16
10th grade.....	10
8th grade.....	6
Elementary.....	24
6th grade.....	12
1st grade.....	12
TOTAL	40

Background Data

Personal data on the socio-economic and educational background of the informants was collected in two ways. First, explanatory letters and questionnaire forms (see Appendix A, pp. 133-34) were distributed to the informants for the parents to complete. Secondly, the cumulative, or "permanent," record folders of the informants were consulted for information not supplied by the completed questionnaires (e.g., birthplace of informant, language spoken at home, etc.). Most of the informants returned questionnaires completed in full; a few did not return them at all, or completed only a portion of the items.

Information on the social and educational background of the informants is presented in Table 1: Informants—Norfolk Dialect Study (p. 6). Each of the informants is identified by a number from one through forty, then an ethnic designation (W=white, N=Negro, C=Chinese), a notation of grade level (1, 6, 8, or 10) and one of sex (M or F).⁸ The father was

⁸The distribution of the informants by schools is as follows: Granby High, 1-5; Washington High, 6-10; Jacox Junior High, 11-16; Titus, 20-22 (sixth grade) and 29-30 (first grade); Camp Allen, 26-28 (sixth) and 35-37 (first); Lansdale, 17-19 (sixth); Coleman Place, 38-40 (first); Madison 23-25 (sixth); and Larchmont, 32-34 (first). The "paired" schools (see p. 4) were Lansdale-Coleman and Madison-Larchmont.

considered "head of family" except where the parents were separated, divorced, or widowed; in that case, the mother was considered as head of the household,⁹ and information on the father is represented in parentheses. A straight line indicates that the student did not return a completed questionnaire and that the information was not available from other sources.

Social Status of Informants

A five-point ranking system based on the occupation and education of the head of the household was set up in order to determine the social and economic status of each of the informants. The same scale was used for the head of the family regardless of whether that person was the mother, the father, or a court-appointed guardian. The occupational ranks were given the following numerical values:

- 1—major professionals, managers of large concerns, officers (USN)
- 2—clerks, supervisors, managers of small businesses, Chief Petty Officers (USN)
- 3—craftsmen, skilled laborers, enlisted personnel (USN)
- 4—service workers and unskilled laborers
- 5—unemployed, disabled, and welfare recipients

A similar scale was used to evaluate educational achievement:

- 1—college graduate
- 2—some college
- 3—high school graduate
- 4—some high school (7th grade and up)
- 5—finished grade school or less (6th grade or less)

⁹Previous studies have indicated that the absence or presence of the father in the home has no appreciable effect on a child's use of standard or non-standard English.

In the case of one informant (32 W 1 M) the mother's occupation and education were used for the social ranking although the father was in the home but a graduate student and not technically employed. If the father's occupation as a student (with a status score of 3) and education (status of 1) are considered, the informant's index score will be 32, still placing him in the upper echelons of the sample.

Each informant was then assigned two numbers, one for occupational status and one for education. These numbers were multiplied by factors of 9 and 5, respectively, in order to ascribe the proper weight to the various scores, and the total of these two numbers was taken as the informant's social-status index.¹⁰ In the five instances where both parents were employed, five points were deducted from this total for skilled occupations and three for unskilled (e.g. 5 points for a secretary or clerk, 3 for a domestic). This last adjustment was devised as a means of reflecting the economic advantage of a second income. According to the way the social ranking scale is set up, the higher the index number, the lower the prestige, and vice versa.¹¹

The parents of six of the informants did not provide information on their education in the questionnaires. Since Norfolk City Schools has a policy of keeping such information strictly confidential, it was necessary to assign an arbitrary number in the interest of consistency.

¹⁰The procedure for the social classification of informants is adapted from the one used in the Detroit Dialect Study which, in turn, is based on August Hollingshead's Social Class and Mental Illness (1958) and Alba Edwards' Alphabetical Index of Occupations and Industries (1940); see Roger W. Shuy, Walter A. Wolfram, and William K. Riley, Field Techniques in an Urban Language Study (Washington: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1968), pp. 11-15. The Detroit study used a seven-point scale but involved a much larger sample. The five-point scale used in the present study is similar to the one devised by William A. Labov, The Social Stratification of English in New York City (Washington: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1965), pp. 212-13.

¹¹E. King Reid, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Old Dominion University, has provided valuable assistance in adapting the Detroit and New York scales of social status for the Norfolk study. According to Mr. Reid and other consulting sociologists, the ranking of informants in the four social-status groups corresponds to the actual status of occupational and educational levels in the Norfolk area.

Since non-response on such questions seems to indicate reluctance to provide data that might be embarrassing to the informant, it was arbitrarily assumed that the head of the household had less than a high school education. Each of these six informants, then, Nos. 7, 8, 10, 16, 33, and 37, was automatically given an educational ranking of four. Possibly a lower score might have been more accurate, but the score of four seemed more fair.

The index scores of the informants, ranked in order from highest to lowest position on the social spectrum, are presented in Table 2, Social Ranking of Informants, p. 10.

Grouping of Informants by Social Status

On the basis of the social index scores, the informants are separated into four groups which correspond to social classes. Group One might be considered middle-class; the head of the household is a high school graduate, perhaps with some college education, holding a white collar job. Group Four, consisting of the unemployed, the disabled, and welfare recipients with grade school or less than high school diploma, are the seriously disadvantaged and may be considered the lower class, or "the dispirited poor." Groups Two and Three represent the working class; the distinction between these two groups is not a hard-and-fast one, although Group Two includes skilled workers or service workers with more education or separate income from the wife, while Group Three includes unskilled or service workers with less than high school education and the one unemployed parent who is a high school graduate. Each of the four groups contains ten informants.

The distribution of the status scores of the forty informants is presented in Figure 1, p. 11. The distribution of the scores of white and Negro informants is presented in Figures 2 and 3, respectively (p. 11).

TABLE 2
SOCIAL RANKING OF INFORMANTS

Group I

3 W 10 M	1	Appliance dealer	1	college grad.	9 + 5	14
9 W 10 M	1	Lt. Commander, USN	2	some college	9 + 10	19
32 W 1 M	2	Clerk	2	some college	18 + 10	28
38 W 1 M	2	Chief, USN	2	some college	18 + 10	28
19 W 6 M	2	Musician, USN Show Band	2	some college	18 + 10	28
4 W 10 F	2	Sales supervisor	3	h. s. grad.	18 + 15 - 5	28
5 W 10 F	2	Secretary-clerk	3	h. s. grad.	18 + 15	33
23 C 6 F	2	Restaurant owner	3	h. s. grad.	18 + 15	33
24 W 6 M	2	Secretary	3	h. s. grad.	18 + 15	33
27 W 6 M	2	Chief, USN	3	h. s. grad.	18 + 15	33

Group II

37 N 1 F	2	Union clerk	4	—	18 + 20	38
40 W 1 F	3	Enlisted, USN	3	h. s. grad.	27 + 15 - 5	38
1 W 10 F	3	Plumber	3	h. s. grad.	27 + 15 - 5	38
36 W 1 F	3	Enlisted, USN	3	h. s. grad.	27 + 15	42
14 N 8 M	3	Barber	4	8th grade	27 + 20 - 3	44
34 N 6 M	4	Domestic	2	some college	36 + 10	46
8 N 10 F	3	Enlisted, USN	4	—	27 + 20	47
39 W 1 M	3	Loom operator	4	11th grade	27 + 20	47
28 N 6 M	3	Machine operator	5	4th grade	27 + 25 - 3	49
21 N 6 M	4	Truck driver	4	8th grade	36 + 20 - 3	53

Group III

12 N 8 M	4	Truck driver	4	11th grade	36 + 20	56
17 N 6 M	4	Truck driver	4	8th grade	36 + 20	56
26 N 6 F	4	Domestic	4	10th grade	36 + 20	56
30 N 1 F	4	Warehouseman	4	8th grade	36 + 20	56
33 N 1 F	4	Janitor	4	—	36 + 20	56
35 N 1 M	4	Hat check	4	7th grade	36 + 20	56
31 N 1 M	5	Unemployed	3	h. s. grad.	45 + 15	60
2 N 10 M	4	Custodian	5	1st grade	36 + 25	61
11 N 8 F	4	Domestic	5	6th grade	36 + 25	61
7 N 10	4	Construction worker	4	—	36 + 25	61

Group IV

15 N 8 M	5	Unemployed	4	7th grade	45 + 20	65
6 N 10 M	5	Unemployed	4	9th grade	45 + 20	65
16 N 8 F	5	Unemployed	4	—	45 + 20	65
20 N 6 M	5	Unemployed	4	11th grade	45 + 20	65
29 N 1 M	5	Unemployed-welfare	4	11th grade	45 + 20	65
18 N 6 F	5	Unemployed-welfare	4	10th grade	45 + 20	65
25 N 6 M	5	Unemployed	4	12th grade	45 + 20	65
10 N 10 M	5	Unemployed	4	—	45 + 20	65
13 N 8 M	5	Disabled	5	3rd grade	45 + 25	70
22 N 6 F	5	Widow-welfare	5	grade school	45 + 25	70

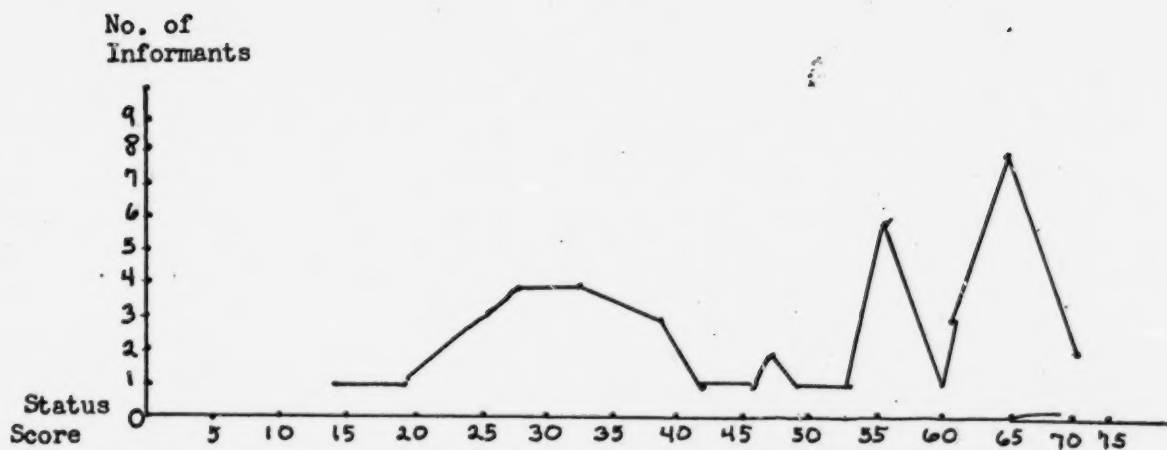


Figure 1.--Distribution of status scores for entire sample.

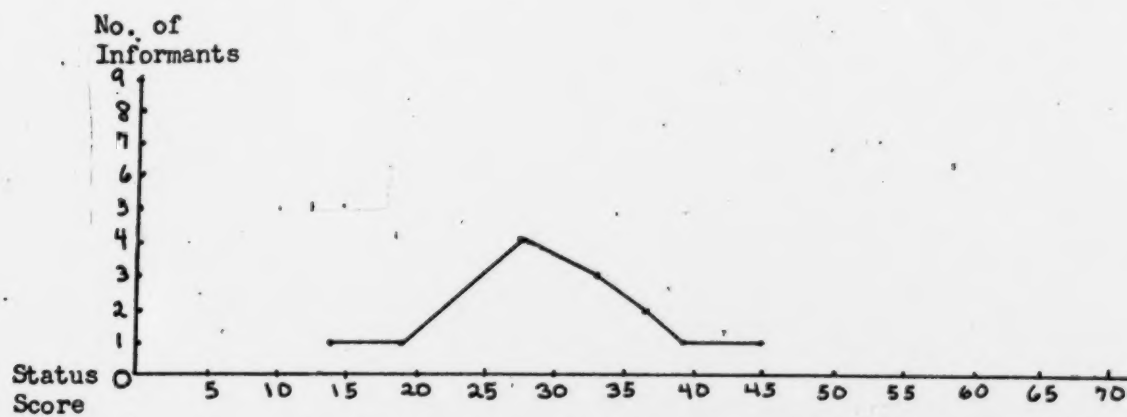


Figure 2.--Distribution of status scores for white sample.

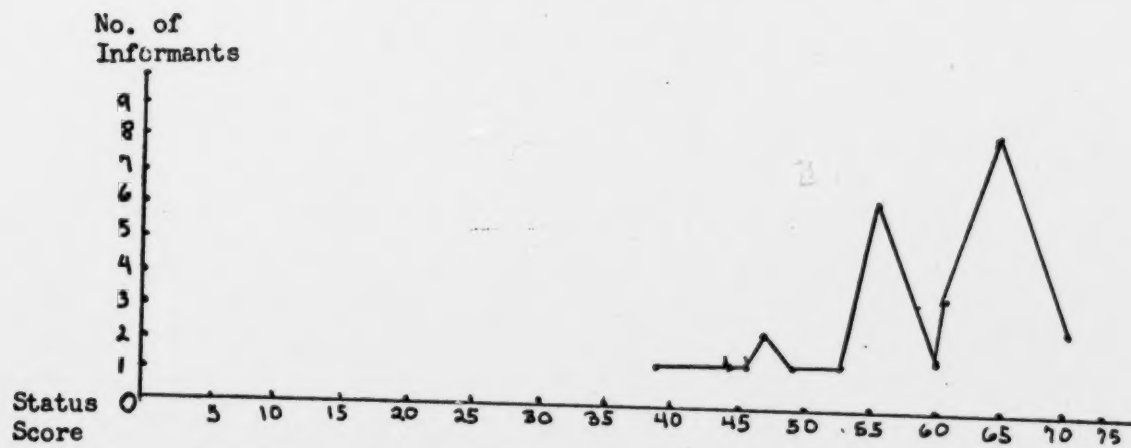


Figure 3.--Distribution of status scores for Negro sample.

Biases in the Sample

Although the sample was drawn at random from among the population of the Norfolk City Schools, a number of biases unavoidably resulted. Each pupil in the school system had an equal chance of being represented in that no group was intentionally excluded, yet once the decision was made to draw the sample from the four grades in the nine schools, a limitation of selectivity was imposed. The sample nevertheless represents a broad cross-section of the Norfolk school population.

Because the sample was devised to provide a cross-section drawn at random, there was an imbalance in terms of social group (see Figures 1-3, p. 11) and race (see Figure 4, p. 13). Twenty-six of the informants were Negroes, thirteen were white, and one was Chinese; the ethnic distribution reflects the composition of the schools from which the sample was drawn. In terms of social-status groups, no upper-class informants were included. There was a disparity among the social groupings of the informants of the two major ethnic groups: no lower working-class (Group III) or lower-class (Group IV) whites were included, although there were a number of Negroes at these status levels; similarly, no middle-class Negroes and few upper working-class Negroes were included. The apparent polarization of white informants in the higher ranges of the social-status ranks and Negroes at the lower end of the scale seems, however, to represent the distribution of the ethnic groups in the Norfolk population. The chance selection of informants also led to a slight under-representation of female informants, who numbered sixteen of the forty.

The primary purpose of the present study is to provide a description of non-standard morphology and syntax among the children in the

Norfolk City Schools; the analysis of the social distribution of non-standard English is a secondary consideration. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned biases should be kept in mind in the matter of the ethnic identification of the informants whose English is non-standard. Comparisons between ethnic groups of similar social status, which might have been enlightening, are not possible because of limitations of the sample.

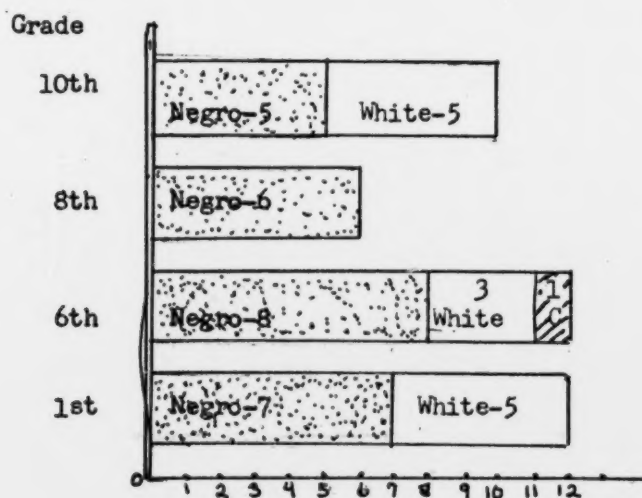


Figure 4.--Distribution of sample by grade level and ethnic group.

Interviews

Permission to visit the schools and collect tape-recorded samples of the speech of the pupils was granted by Norfolk City Schools in December, 1970, shortly before Christmas vacation. Interviews were conducted in January, February, and March, 1971. Arrangements to visit each school were made with the respective principals or assistant principals, and interviews were conducted in whatever space was available in the building. Each interview, which occupied forty-five minutes to an hour, was recorded on Scotch Magnetic Tape #175 (5 inch reels) using an AIWA TP 719 S

recorder and an Electrovoice 647-A Dynamic Hi-Z lavalier microphone.

Each informant was interviewed separately.¹² No attempt was made to conceal the tape-recorder or microphone or to trick the informant in any way. A lavalier microphone was used primarily in order to secure the most accurate recording of the informants' speech, but also to avoid the self-consciousness that results from asking someone to speak into a microphone that must be held. The fieldworker explained to the informants that they had been picked at random for a study of "the way different people in Norfolk talk," and that the study was partly "to find out why people around here don't talk the same as people in other parts of the country." It was made clear at the beginning of the interview that none of the informants would be identified by name in any discussion of the data, and, furthermore, that the contents of the interview would not be turned over to the teachers or principals for analysis. Being assured of complete anonymity, the informant was encouraged to talk as freely as he liked on any subject ("The more you talk on my tape-recorder, the more you'll help me with my study"). As an additional incentive, informants who had not heard their voices on tape before were promised a chance to listen to a part of the interview when it was completed.

During the interview the informant was asked a series of questions about school, friends, leisure activities, aspirations, etc. Then a

¹²An exception to the rule of separate interviews occurred once when the fieldworker was interviewing one informant and another one arrived early, eager to begin talking on the tape-recorder. For a while both informants talked to the fieldworker and to each other, then the second one was interviewed alone. The informants were 29 N 1 M and 30 N 1 F.

series of "word games," or tests to elicit specific features (e.g. plural formations) were conducted. The Norfolk Dialect Study Questionnaire,¹³ presented in Appendix B (pp. 135-39), was followed in general, although strict adherence to it was sometimes sacrificed in order to let the informants talk at greater length on subjects that they were particularly interested in. All of the "word games" were conducted with all informants except those who expressed despair after receiving the instructions; this was a common response of first-graders with some of the more complicated games.

Analysis of Data

A complete typescript of each tape-recorded interview was made. No attempt was made to provide a complete phonetic or phonemic transcription; the scope of the present study is concerned with phonology only in matters where it intersects morphology and syntax. Great care was taken to insure accuracy in the typescripts. Items that were not clearly audible on the tapes were marked accordingly and not considered in the analysis of the data.

The typescripts were read several times and items of non-standard morphology and syntax were marked and double-checked against the tapes. An analysis and description of recurring features of non-standard English will be presented in the following chapters, along with relevant examples.

¹³The questionnaire used here is adapted from the Washington Dialect Study Questionnaire, which was, in turn, adapted from the one used in the Detroit Dialect Study. Ralph W. Fasold (who developed the "word games" and provided the Washington questionnaire) and Roger W. Shuy recommended the use of their questionnaire and approved the modifications, which were minor.

Some selective editing was necessary in presenting examples.

Many informants connected a long series of clauses with a succession of and's and so's; in these cases, the relevant clause alone was used as an example. False starts are generally not included. Hesitations are indicated by three periods without spaces (to avoid confusion with deletion ellipsis). None of the examples involve deletion of any part; repetition and such items as uh, ah, let me see have been retained. Punctuation and capitalization are obviously imposed arbitrarily on the examples of speech. Standard spelling has been used; "dialect" spellings have been avoided.

CHAPTER II

THE ZERO COPULA

The zero copula is defined by William A. Stewart as "the absence of an explicit predicating verbs [*i.e.* a finite form of 'be'] in certain dialect constructions, where Standard English has such a verb (usually in the present tense)."¹ Juanita Williamson, whose 1965 study of Negro high school students' speech in Memphis was the first to mention the zero copula,² observes that "the zero copula occurs wherever the present tense forms am, is, are, or be may occur."³ Beryl Bailey has noted four syntactic environments in which the zero copula occurs: before adjectives, before nominals, before adverbs and prepositional phrases, and after the filler subjects there and it.⁴ William Labov has observed the zero copula in these four and three additional syntactic patterns: before negatives, before present participles, and before the intentional future gonna.⁵ A study of non-standard English in New York City by Labov

¹William A. Stewart, "Continuity and Change in American Negro Dialects," The Florida FL Reporter, VI (Spring, 1968), p. 14.

²Juanita Williamson, The Speech of Negro High School Students in Memphis, Tennessee, p. 2.

³Ibid., p. 54.

⁴Beryl Loftman Bailey, "Toward a New Perspective in Negro English Dialectology," American Speech, XL (October, 1965), 171-77. Bailey's corpus was a novel written in Negro English, Warren Miller's The Cool World. Although the use of a literary text in dialect scholarship is somewhat frowned upon, Bailey's conclusions drawn from this corpus were corroborated by research she conducted among pre-freshmen at Tougaloo College, Mississippi.

⁵William Labov, "Contraction, Deletion, and Inherent Variability in the English Copula," Language, XLV (December, 1969), 716-17.

and others further suggests a number of categories in which the copula is rarely, if ever, deleted: when the copula is in the past tense; with the first person singular pronoun subject I; in non-finite constructions (infinitives, imperatives, and modals); when the copula is in clause-final position; in tag questions; with existential emphasis; and with the lexical items that, what, and it.⁶

Syntactic Patterns of Copula Deletion

In the Norfolk corpus, the zero copula occurred in many of the same positions that the form be of Standard English can occur. The most frequent category of copula deletion is before predicate adjectives, with or without an intensifier.

I don't go with Sherwanna, she too ugly for me. 29 N 1 M

If they catch it, you out. 39 N 1 M

She greedy. 35 N 1 M

She 'bout eleven, I mean twelve. 33 N 1 F

He real small. 22 N 6 F

He older than two month. 20 N 6 M

I too big for cars and things. 21 N 6 M

You throw the dice, you know, see who first. 28 N 6 M

I don't think my game that good. 14 N 8 M

⁶William Labov, Paul Cohen, Clarence Robins and John Leivers, A Study of the Non-Standard English of Negro and Puerto Rican Speakers in New York City (Washington: U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, 1968), cited by Walter Wolfram, A Sociolinguistic Description of Detroit Negro Speech, p. 166. See also William Labov, "Contraction, Deletion, and Inherent Variability in the English Copula," p. 719.

She fat, too. 30 N 1 F

Rest of 'em not scared but my baby brother is. 29 N 1 M

If it warm, if it warm enough, I go out Lafayette Park, do a little exercise out there, flips and stuff. 2 N 10 M

A second group of predicate modifiers following the zero copula includes the past participle of verbs, particularly the lexical item named (realized as /nem/⁷ and represented here as name).

I guess the other girls just not interested in what we doing. 16 N 8 F

He name Anthony. 28 N 6 M

My brother name Percy. 29 N 1 M

My baby sister name Sheraldine. 30 N 1 F

A second syntactic environment in which zero copula occurred was before noun phrases.

They old friends, yes. 2 N 10 M

She a nuisance herself. 6 N 10 M

I think they hamsters. 16 N 8 F

Then it his go. 15 N 8 M

They both girls. 39 N 1 M

They motor bikes, got gas in 'em. 20 N 6 M

This my food, I bought it. 35 N 1 M

Bernadine and me twin. 30 N 1 F

The copula was characteristically deleted in one particular noun-phrase

⁷Phonemic symbols used throughout the present paper follow the system of Roger W. Shuy, Discovering American Dialects (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1967), pp. 7-14.

construction that corresponds to the Standard English construction of Possessive Pronoun + name + copula + (Name) (e. g. Her name is Susan).

His name Floyd. 8 N 10 F

Her name Miss Williams. 15 N 8 M

His name Boo Boo. 19 W 6 M

Her name Miss Green. 20 N 6 M

His name Lady. 33 N 1 F

A number of the nominal constructions following the zero copula were noun clauses.

By the way, that how much you pay. 28 N 6 M

That the way I play it. 28 N 6 M

That what we say. 35 N 1 M

Then every time when I saw the sun wa' going down, that when I thought I'd die. 2 N 10 M

That what I did for Christmas, I had me a good time. 12 N 8 M

Zero copula occurred rather frequently with the intentional future gonna (/gə/ or /gən/ or /goɪn tə/). A few of the instances of copula deletion were in simple sentences; most of them were in complex sentences.

He gonna fight the man. 29 N 1 M

Teacher gonna holler at you, you know how teacher are. 6 N 10 M

When I grow up I gonna marry you. 29 N 1 M

I gonna see it today. 30 N 1 F

He thinks that don't get out there, the devil gonna get you. 34 N 1 M

Everybody say they gonna get her a present. 31 N 1 M

This summer when school's out we gonna go somewhere, probably. 37 N 1 F

We talk about things we gonna do the next day and the following or when we go home what we gonna do, or so on. 16 N 8 F

They say they know they gonna die. 28 N 6 M

Perhaps related to use of the zero copula with the gonna/going to is its use with the progressive (-ing) form of the verb.

It seem like they working. 16 N 8 F

You wouldn't kinda figure that they doing it theyself, but they really are. 16 N 8 F

She hollering at the students, I guess. 14 N 8 M

She say she going. 29 N 1 M

You getting beat up, and they throw you out there out the door on the sand. 20 N 6 M

Do not fight or laugh out loud when we having a meeting. 18 N 6 F

When we hiding and she can't find us, she call us stupid and all like that. 26 N 6 F

Another pattern in which the zero copula appears is with supposed to (variously /pozɔ/, /poz/, /pozə/, /sɒpozə/, /səpozə/).

The next person who gets to the place where we 'posed to be going, they get to be the mother. 8 N 10 F

Like when Simons says stoop you stoop, and like when you say stand you 'pose stand. 13 N 8 M

We sposed to buy a home out Poplar Hall, may get a dog then. 20 N 6 M

You sposed to buy houses. 21 N 6 M

You shake them things, and how many you get you 'posed to go. 33 N 1 F

You not supposed to let no one get yours. 36 W 1 F

I can't get it in the little hole you 'posed to put it in. 39 W 1 M

Zero copula also occurred with adverbs and prepositional phrases.

They down to the bathroom now. 29 N 1 M

Junior and senior low out there. 20 N 6 M

The nurse not here. 29 N 1 M

She in Kentucky, where we used to live. 21 N 6 M

We just on our own, just do whatever we wish to do. 2 N 10 M

I would like for 'em to hear what on my mind. 12 N 8 M

The use of the zero copula was also observed in questions, but only in the speech of three first graders.

What if you don' know where your home at? 30 N 1 F

Where the man you married? 29 N 1 M

What this? 29 N 1 M

What that? 31 N 1 M

All of the examples of zero copula cited above correspond to the present-tense forms is and are of Standard English. A number of informants also deleted the copula in the past tense. In some of these instances of deletion of was or were, past time is marked by the presence of a co-occurring past-time marker within the sentence of clause. The past markers were adverbs or other verbs.

I always saying I wa' going out for football. 2 N 10 M

They came in this cave and the devil there. 19 W 6 M

She fell asleep but the television still on. 21 N 6 M

So he got in his little car. He followed 'em, and they in the station wagon. 28 N 6 M

One night I staying with this girl name Vicky's. 33 N 1 F

One time that baby too heavy. 30 N 1 F

I was funny when I little girl. 7 N 10 F

She didn't go that, that place where she supposed to go, and they found it, um, and then she ran. They said she ran into this deep thing. She ran through the woods, through this uh, to this house, and then the judge behind her. 18 N 6 F

They had motorcycles. They driving it, and there was a great big wire fence. 39 W 1 M

We went to the beach and these mean children out throwing him up the sliding board, and he wasn't but a kitten. 20 N 6 M

I thought some witches gonna come out. 35 N 6 M

When he touched her she say that she gonna tell Killer. 8 N 10 F

In a way she did. It was a lady teacher. And uh I can't remember what I ever did, but every little thing I'd do she always scoring on me for it. Only thing I wa' trying to do wa' help. 21 N 6 M

In several cases where the zero copula corresponded to the tense-marker was or were, the past marker was attached to another verb in the sentence.

My mama sposed to got one for Christmas. 35 N 1 M

Only grown men sposed to been there. 20 N 6 M

We sposed to went to New York. 21 N 6 M

Bullwhip Griffin sposed to fought this man. 20 N 6 M

In the other instances, there is no linguistic indication of past time, but the context of the sentence makes it evident that the deleted copula corresponds to was or were.

Fieldworker: Do you have a pet?

Informant: No.

Fieldworker: Have you ever had a dog or a cat or a bird?

Informant: Yes.

Fieldworker: Tell me about your pet.
 Informant: My pet was a dog.
 Fieldworker: What was his name?
 Informant: Frisky.
 Fieldworker: Oh, that's a good name. What did he look like?
 Informant: He white all over. 21 N 1 M

Informant: That was a ghost. I had to run out, I had to....
 I had to run downstairs and ask my mama to give me some water.
 Fieldworker: I bet. What did the ghost look like?
 Informant: I don't know, he just, he just a ghost. I don't know what kinda ghost. 29 N 1 M

The deletion of the past-tense copula occurred frequently enough in the Norfolk corpus, to suggest that the feature is subject to regional variation, since its occurrence was described as "rare" or "unusual" in studies of non-standard English in New York City and Washington, D. C.⁸

Deletion of the copula occurred after both noun and pronoun subjects, including the first person singular pronoun. Interestingly, Labov found that in New York the form am or its contraction 'm occurred with "overwhelming frequency" even in the speech of informants who deleted other forms of the copula.⁹ There were, however, numerous examples of the zero copula after I in the Norfolk corpus. Similar examples were found in Juanita Williamson's Memphis study.¹⁰

I gonna see it today. 30 N 1 F

When I grow up I gonna marry you. 29 N 1 M

A lotta place I wanting to go. 20 N 6 M

⁸ See above, p.

⁹ Labov, "Contraction, Deletion, and Inherent Variability in the English Copula," p. 719.

¹⁰ Juanita Williamson, The Speech of Negro High School Students, p. 54.

I putting this in the trash. 29 N 1 M

He say, "I gon' poke one o' your eyes out." 35 N 1 M

When I not quarterback, he quarterback. 21 N 6 M

Like the zero copula after I, which seems to be subject to regional variation among non-standard dialects, the zero copula after the lexical items that, it, and what occurred fairly frequently in the Norfolk corpus, although Labov found this to be extremely rare in New York City.¹¹

That about it. 2 N 10 M

That the way I play it. 28 N 6 M

That what we say. 35 N 1 M

That when I thought I'd die. 2 N 19 M

I would like for 'em to hear what on my mind. 14 N 8 M

It about a lot o' teenagers. 2 N 10 M

When it Valentine d...time she give us a sucker. 39 W 1 M

It just what a person do, you know. 6 N 10 M

Then it his go. 15 N 8 M

It all according to what you like and what you don't like.
6 N 10 M

If it warm, if it warm enough, I go out Lafayette Park, do
a little exercise there, flips and stuff. 2 N 10 M

The last two examples involve the filler subject it, as opposed to the personal pronoun with an antecedent. Such use of the zero copula was

¹¹Labov et al., Non-Standard English of Negro and Puerto Rican Speakers, cited in Walter Wolfram, A Sociolinguistic Description of Detroit Negro Speech, p. 166.

also noted by Beryl Bailey.¹²

Word Games

In the word games there were three verbal cues to elicit either some form of be or predicate without the copula. (See Appendix B, Norfolk Dialect Study Questionnaire, Part II, Section III, pp. 138-39.) The cues, with the standard (SE) and non-standard (NSE) responses were as follows:

<u>Cue</u>	<u>Responses</u>	
	1- SE	2-NSE
C. He bigger than me, I know he ____.	is	bigger
E. Sometime Joseph be up there, I know he ¹³ ____.	is	up there
F. They first graders, I know they ____.	are	first-graders

This section of the word games was not done with the first-grade informants.

Although these three cues were designed to elicit responses that indicate copula deletion or inclusion, the test was not found to reflect quite the same distribution as the analysis of zero copula in the corpus. Two informants (5 W 10 F and 9 W 10 M) who did not delete the copula elsewhere in the interview did so in responding, "bigger" to cue C. One informant (25 N 6 M) gave Response 2 to all three cues, although he deleted the copula only one-third of the time in discourse. Altogether, nine informants of the 28 non-first-graders gave the

¹²Beryl Bailey, "Toward a New Perspective in Negro English Dialectology," pp. 174-175.

¹³Cue E is a test for invariant be; it is included here as well because of the two responses that represent copula deletion.

second, or non-standard response to the cues.

Social and Ethnic Distribution of the Zero Copula

Previous studies of non-standard English, particularly that of disadvantaged Negroes, have characterized the zero copula as one of its most conspicuous and characteristic features. Twenty-five of the twenty-six Negro informants used the zero copula; the exception was 17 N 6 M (Group III). This feature was also found in the speech of three of the white elementary students: 19 W 6 M (Group I), 36 W 1 F (Group II), and 29 W 1 M (Group II). A consideration of the frequency of occurrence of the zero copula indicates that deletion of a form of be is associated with the Negro informants of the low-status social groups.

The deletion of the past-tense copula occurred in the speech of fourteen informants. Two were white, twelve Negro. One of the white informants in Group I, one white and three Negroes in Group II, and six and three informants, respectively, in the all-Negro Groups III and IV. None of these fourteen informants deleted was or were more than two or three times.

In tabulating the frequency of occurrence of copula deletion, the potential uses of the copula was first determined for each informant. Each instance of the full copula (am, is, are, was, were), the contracted forms ('m, 's, and 're), and the negative forms (isn't, aren't, wasn't, weren't, and ain't¹⁴), was noted. The number

¹⁴Ain't sometimes corresponds to Standard English haven't or hasn't; only instances of ain't that correspond to isn't, aren't, wasn't of weren't were counted here.

of times the copula was deleted was added to the total of times the copula occurred in the speech of each informant, and the total was taken as the potential total of copula occurrence. The only exceptions were false starts and ambiguous cases in which the word after the copula began with a sibilant (e. g. she scared versus she's scared); such instances were not included in the total. The frequency of occurrence was then computed as the quotient of the total copula deletions divided by potential uses.

The distribution of the zero copula according to the four social-status groups is presented in Figure 1 (below).

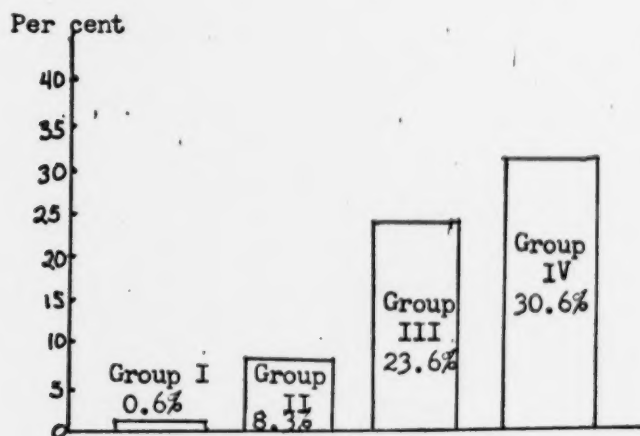


Figure 1.--Distribution of zero copula by social status group.

As Figure 1 indicates, there is a marked variation in the mean rate of copula deletion among the four social groups. For all but one of the Group I informants (19 W 6 M), copula was obligatory, according to Standard English usage. Eight of the Group II informants, on the

other hand, deleted the copula; the exceptions were 1 W 10 F and 40 W 1 F. Only one of the Group III informants (17 N 6 M) categorically included the copula, and none of the Group IV informants did so. The means and ranges for the four groups are as follows:

Group	Mean	Range
I	0.56%	0- 5.7%
II	8.3 %	0-20.8%
III	23.6 %	0-57.1%
IV	30.6 %	13.3-69.5%

A breakdown of the data by the sex of the informant suggests that males delete the copula more frequently than females. The mean frequency of occurrence of copula deletion among informants who delete the form was found to be 25.6% for the males and 18.5% for females.

The frequency count among informants who deleted the copula was computed by grade levels and the means are presented in Figure 2 (below).

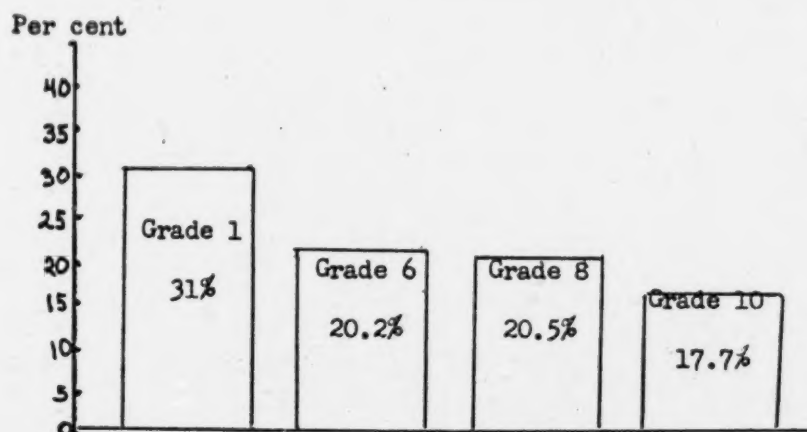


Figure 2.—Distribution of zero copula by grade level. (Includes only informants in whose speech zero copula occurred.)

The rate of deletion among first-graders was 31%; for sixth-graders, 20.2%; for eighth-graders, 20.5%; and for tenth-graders, 17.7%. The frequency of copula deletion seems to decrease by age and educational experience; the minimal difference between the sixth graders and the tenth graders might be accounted for by the fact that males outnumbered females in the sixth grade by eight to four.

Conclusions

The data suggest two points: (1) the higher the social status of the informant, the less likely he is to delete the copula; and (2) the lower the social status of the informant, the more likely he is to delete it. The increasing frequency of occurrence of copula deletion with lower social status suggests that the zero copula is a clear-cut instance of a socially stratified feature of non-standard dialect.

CHAPTER III

INVARIANT BE

Invariant be, or the use of be as a finite verb, is a non-standard feature found among Norfolk schoolchildren which has received considerable attention in recent studies or non-standard dialects. Robert L. Graves, who compared the speech of lower-class Negro and white children in Alabama, observed that the invariant be occurred only in the speech of his Negro informants.¹ Ruth Golden, working with children in Detroit schools, has listed "the antiquated use of be" as one of the principal points of divergence between Negro and non-Negro children in the inner city.² Both Graves and Golden, as well as Juanita Williamson,³ have treated the use of be as a finite verb in terms of correspondence to Standard English am, is, are, was, or were.

William A. Stewart, however, has discovered that some Negro speakers of non-standard dialects "make a grammatical and semantic distinction by means of be, illustrated by such constructions as he busy 'he is busy

¹Robert Layton Graves, "Language Differences among Upper- and Lower-class Negro and White Eighth Graders in East Central Alabama," Dissertation Abstracts, XXVIII (January-March, 1968), 3658 a.

²Ruth Golden, Learning Standard English by Linguistic Methods (Washington: U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education ERIC Document ED 018 783, 1968), p. 2.

³Juanita V. Williamson, The Speech of Negro High School Students in Memphis, Tennessee, pp. 54-55.

(momentarily)' or he workin' 'he is working (right now)' as opposed to he be busy 'he is (habitually) busy' or he be workin' 'he is working (steadily).'⁴ The grammars of other dialects are unable to make such distinctions.⁴ The same distinction that Stewart observed in his Washington data is also reported by Edmund Anderson in his description of the speech of Baltimore Negroes.⁵

In addition to the durative be construction noted by Stewart, Ralph W. Fasold has observed that be-finite can also indicate intermittence. According to Fasold, "the meaning of Black English be . . . involves repeated but not continuous occurrence," and occurs with special frequency "in the descriptions of holidays (which recur at regular intervals) and in descriptions of games (which are played repeatedly but not continuously)."⁶ Noting that adverbs which indicate intermittence, such as sometime, every day, usually, in the morning, tend to co-occur with invariant be, Fasold further remarks that all the adverbs which can co-occur with be-finite "refer either to an extended period of time within which an event occurs frequently, or to a point of time which recurs."⁷

The be-finite intermittent construction can refer to either an

⁴William A. Stewart, "Sociolinguistic Factors in the History of American Negro Dialects," The Florida FL Reporter, V (Spring, 1967), p. 30.

⁵Edmund A. Anderson, A Grammatical Overview of Baltimore Non-standard Negro English, p. 46.

⁶Ralph W. Fasold, "Tense and the Form be in Black English," Language, XLV (December, 1969), 764.

⁷Ibid., pp. 766-67.

action or a state of being that takes place at non-continuous intervals.⁸ Similarly, Anderson found evidence that "finite-be may indicate repetition, recurrence (or potential recurrence), but it always indicates that no specific time designation is intended." He characterizes such finite-be constructions as A-temporal,⁹ since adverbs which inhibit the use of finite-be are once, one time, one night, etc., and last night, last week, etc., all denoting specific time. Anderson further distinguishes A-temporal be-finite from "pseudo-examples" of invariant be which seem to result from loss of an underlying will.¹⁰ Fasold makes a similar distinction, citing also the loss of an underlying would.¹¹

The invariant be in non-standard English, then, seems to involve semantic distinctions of duration and intermittence that cannot be expressed in Standard English by means of non-finite be. Furthermore, the negative form of invariant be is don't be, which does not correspond to the Standard English forms isn't, aren't, wasn't, weren't. In light of the non-correspondence of be-finite to Standard English, the invariant be seems to involve a separate and distinct category of non-standard usage not directly related to non-standard uses of the Standard English copula. A distinction

⁸Ibid., p. 764. See also Walter Wolfram, A Sociolinguistic Description of Detroit Negro Speech, pp. 186-88.

⁹"The term A-temporal is borrowed from Marvin Loflin who used it in various working papers at C. A. L." (Center for Applied Linguistics). See Anderson, A Grammatical Overview of Baltimore Non-standard Negro English, p. 35, n. 6.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 30.

¹¹Ralph Fasold, "Tense and the Form be in Black English," pp. 768-69.

should also be made between occurrences of be which are A-temporal (either durative or intermittent) and those which are temporal and correspond to Standard English will be or would be.

Be-finite (temporal)

A number of examples, or "pseudo-examples," of finite-be occurred in the Norfolk corpus, all of which seem to involve the loss of underlying will or would.

I had the licences and insurances on my minibike, then
I be riding out there. 20 N 6 M

And next year, if I pass, I be going Ruffner Junior
High School. 20 N 6 M

He probably be 'bout that big now, 'cause when I 'there
he wa' 'bout that small. 28 N 6 M

I be a doctor and a police. I rather be a police. 35 N 1 M

I think I be able to if I go to nursing school, which
I'm hoping I will. 16 N 8 F

Fieldworker: What kind of dogs will you have? All German
Shepherds?

Informant: No, not all be shepherds, but they all be
Germans, you see. 9 W 10 M

Two examples of finite be which seem to indicate deletion of would are elliptical clauses in response to direct questions (which are not necessarily non-standard).

Fieldworker: What do you do Christmas?

Informant: Be outdoors playing. 2 N 10 M

Fieldworker: What's your favorite show?

Informant: Probably be the Wild Wild West. 19 W 6 M

Invariant be in A-temporal Constructions

Most instances of finite-be refer to an intermittent, or recurrent, action or state, and most co-occur with adverbs indicating intermittence, especially sometimes and sometime.

Sometimes some guys be messing with my...the guy who hang around me a lot. 15 N 8 M

I don't go to movies alla time. When I do go there, I ah, sometime I look at a football movie 'at be at our center. 15 N 8 M

Sometime they already be out there. 12 N 8 M

In our math class we do 'rithmetic, and sometime it be too hard for us to do. 35 N 1 M

Other adverbs with which finite-be co-occurred were when and then, both of which suggest intermittent activity.

When you be asking her something, she's screaming and stuff. 15 N 8 M

We used to go in the woods and stuff when we be scouting. 17 N 6 M

Whoever call the first busses, busts /bes/ in the pack and then he be first. 15 N 6 M

Then say, "Here I come." And then, then you be come, and you see the person. 34 N 1 M

When they have a costume on, they be a witch. 33 N 1 F

Some instances of finite be do not co-occur with adverbs indicating intermittence but seem to refer to an intermittent activity or state from the evidence of context. A sixth-grade boy, when asked who could belong to his club, replied:

Well, just most the people in neighborhood be in it, the boys. 17 N 6 M

Because a club meets repeatedly but not continuously, and because

different people belong to the club at different times, the use of be seems appropriate to the rule of the informant's non-standard dialect. A similar case was a sixth-grade girl's statement,

I clean the ice box 'cause finger print, dirty
finger prints be on there. 18 N 6 F

The finger prints on the ice box, which she cleans regularly, are therefore only there at non-continuous intervals.

The lexical item if is another adverb (more technically, sentence modifier) which co-occurs with finite be referring to intermittence. Historically, the use of finite be in clauses introduced by if was formerly required by the grammar of Standard English. Now, however, this usage seems to be an archaism, and by analogy to the non-standard occurrence of finite be, might also be considered non-standard. The meaning of the following examples of be seems to indicate intermittence:

Then it be more money if somebody land on your property.
28 N 6 M

If you be first you throw the dice. 21 N 6 M

If I be sick I get a needle. 35 N 1 M

Whatever is your shot, if you be in that ring you
can hit a marble out. 20 N 6 M

The negative form of finite be, which is don't be, was also found in contexts suggesting intermittence.

One day he tell us to show up out here, he don't
show up. But when he show up, we don't be there. 20 N 6 M

I don't want to go to her house 'cause sometime she
don't be home. 35 N 1 M

I want to be a doctor, but if I don't be a doctor I go
in the service. 20 N 6 M

Now, if the use of finite be indicates intermittence, as it seems to in all of the above examples, the finite be + negative might also be indistinguishable from some instances of the negative of the finite be that signifies duration. This seems to be the case with the following examples:

He told me but he said if I don't be careful I might have to have heart transplant when I'm thirty. 26 N 6 F

If I be sick, I get needle. But I don't be sick. I don't want a needle. 35 N 1 M

I know it don't be true. 10 N 10 M

The non-negative equivalents of the former statement seems to be in the sense of the durative construction, *If I be careful (all the time). The non-negative equivalent of the second statement would be *I be sick (habitually), another durative construction. The third example would be *It be true (always, or categorically), which is also durative. One non-negative example of finite be in a durative construction occurred:

1st Informant: He might teach you when you get in a higher grade. 30 N 1 F
Fieldworker: Yeah.

2nd Informant: He be bigger than anybody. 29 N 1 M

No other clear-cut instances of finite be with the meaning of duration occurred except in the negative statements cited above.

In summary, then, the overwhelming majority of the instances of A-temporal invariant be in the present sample signified intermittence. The negative constructions suggest an interrelatedness between the durative and the intermittent semantic categories of be-finite. It should also be noted that be-finite occurs in the same syntactic patterns as the Standard English copula, as evidenced by the above examples.

Word Games

Four items in the auxiliary probe section of the word games dealt with invariant be (see Appendix B, Norfolk Dialect Study Questionnaire, Part II, Section III, pp. 138-39). Twenty-seven informants participated in this section of the word games. It was not attempted with more than a few of the first-graders (even then, not successfully) or with one eighth-grader (11 N 8 F) who burst into tears on hearing the instructions for this section.

Two of the cues elicited responses that strongly support the notion that temporal be corresponds to will be or would be in Standard English. The informants were asked to supply one word to complete each of the following sentences:

D. If he get a walkie-talkie, he be happy; I know he _____.

I. He be in in a few minutes, I know he _____.

Of the twenty-six¹² informants who responded to Item D, fifteen supplied would. (Other responses were is, four times; can, twice; has, twice; will and be, once each. Twenty-seven informants responded to cue I, with fifteen supplying will and 7 would. Other responses were be (three times), is and should (once each). Even those informants who did not delete will or would before be in their own speech interpreted he be happy as "he would be happy" and he be in in a few minutes as

¹²Item D was accidentally omitted in the interview with one informant. Subsequent discussions of word games which list less than the total of informants who participated reflect the fact that an item was omitted through an oversight or that the response was not clearly audible on the tape.

"he will be in in a few minutes."

Two other items were tests for A-temporal be-finite:

E. Sometime Joseph be up there; I know he ____.

K. Sometime my ears be itching; I know they ____.

Seven informants gave is as the response to Item E, six responded would, and three gave do/does. Five responses of be were recorded from four informants who used A-temporal invariant be in their speech and one who did not. Other responses were up there, twice; and could, can, and will, once each. For Item K, of the twenty-five responses, nine were the main verb itch. Nine responded are, four responded do, and one gave be, is, and were, respectively.

The responses to Items D and I were illuminating in that they generally supported the hypothesis of underlying will and would in temporal invariant be constructions. The responses to Items E and K were not so indicative of the patterning of A-temporal be, probably because the more formal word-game situation with one-word responses inhibited non-standard responses, which occurred much more frequently in the narrative section of the interview.

Social and Ethnic Distribution of be-finite

Of the forty informants, thirteen used the A-temporal be-finite constructions. Seven informants used the temporal (will-would) be, including three who also used the A-temporal be.

Because there were no more than three or four occurrences of either type of invariant be in the speech of any informant, the basis of analysis of social and ethnic distribution is the occurrence

or non-occurrence of these forms. The social distribution of A-temporal invariant be is presented in Figure 1 (below). It did not occur in Group I speech, but did occur in the speech of two informants in Group II, six in Group III and five in Group IV. The A-temporal invariant be did not occur in the speech of white informants.

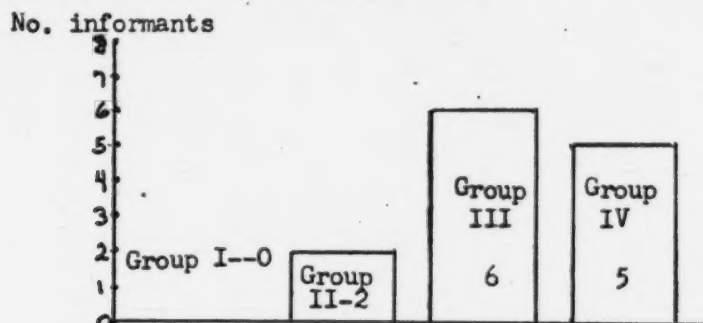


Figure 1.--Distribution of informants who use A-temporal be.

Figure 2 (p. 41) illustrates the social distribution of informants whose use of invariant be corresponds to will be or would be. Of the seven informants in whose speech this feature is found, two were white informants in Group I, three Negroes in Group III, and two Negroes in Group IV.

A composite of the distribution of temporal (will-would) and A-temporal be is presented in Figure 3 (p. 41). Of the seventeen informants who used either type, only three used both. The examples from these informants are not ambiguous, however, since temporality or A-temporality is indicated by co-occurring adverbs or other contextual clues.

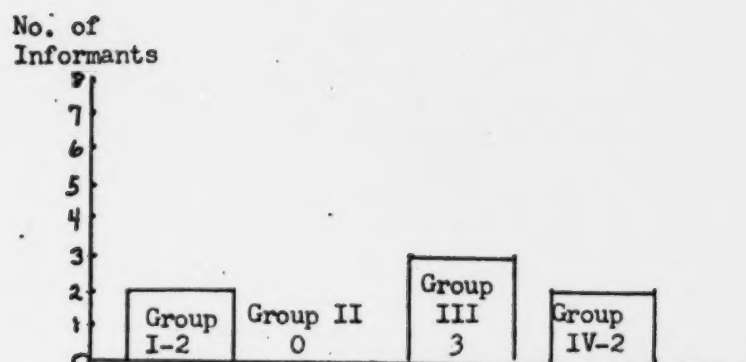


Figure 2.--Distribution of informants who use temporal be .

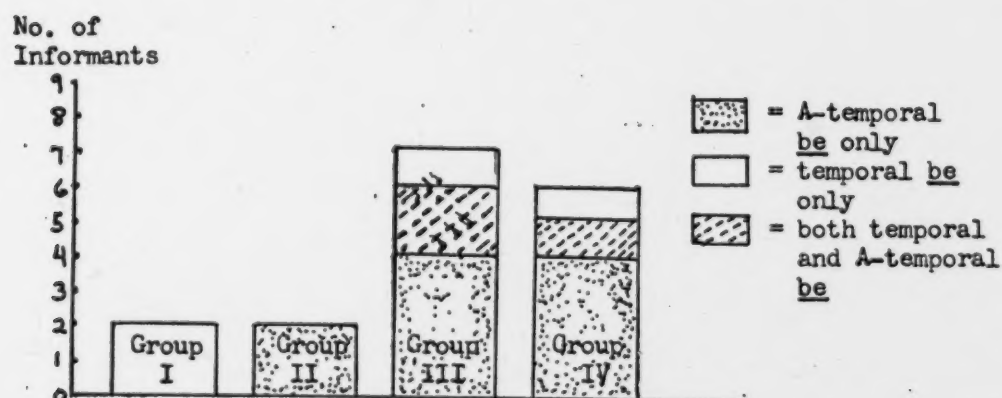


Figure 3.--Distribution of informants who use A-temporal, temporal be, or both.

Of the thirteen informants who use A-temporal be, four are first graders, six are sixth-graders, two are eighth-graders, and one is in the tenth grade. The distribution of this feature by grade level is presented in Figure 4 (p. 42). Because this feature did not occur in white speech, the percentages refer to the total of Negro informants at each grade level. As Figure 4 indicates, the percentages are higher among elementary-level informants than secondary students.

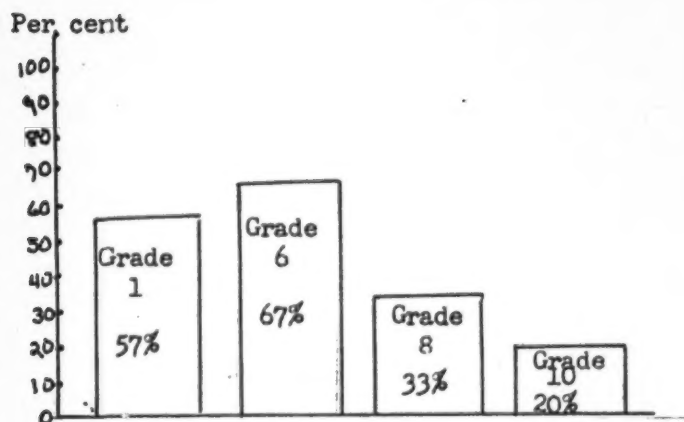


Figure 4.--Distribution of A-temporal be among Negroes by grade level.

Conclusions

The data strongly suggest that the use of be as a finite verb in A-temporal constructions is a distinctive feature of non-standard Negro speech in Norfolk. Since its use is limited to Negroes, it may be considered a clear-cut marker of working- and lower-class Negro speech. The fact that most of the informants who use this feature belong to Groups II and III suggests that it may not be socially stratified within the Negro speech community represented in the sample. The distribution of the feature by age and grade-level suggests that it may be an age-graded phenomenon more closely associated with younger children than with secondary-level speakers.

The use of finite be where Standard English calls for will be or would be does not seem to be socially or ethnically stratified.

CHAPTER IV

OTHER USAGES OF THE FORM BE

In addition to the zero copula and invariant be, several other non-standard usages of the form be occurred in the corpus. These include the use of been, non-agreement of subject and copula, and contraction of past-tense forms of be.

been

Two types of non-standard use of the form been have been noted in other studies of non-standard dialects. Beryl Bailey has noted that in non-standard Negro English been designates time which "extends from the past up to, and even including, the present moment."¹ Ralph Fasold and Walt Wolfram remark that some non-standard Negro dialects can delete the contracted 've and 's forms of have, and that this optional deletion rule operates frequently in such dialects to produce some of the most noticeable features of Negro speech. They also mention a remote time construction with been which indicates that the speaker conceives of the action as having taken place in the distant past. The remote aspect is used in "I been had it there for about three or four years." This latter construction occurs rarely, at least in Northern urban Negro speech.²

¹Beryl Loftman Bailey, "Toward a New Perspective in Negro English Dialectology," p. 175.

²Ralph Fasold and Walt Wolfram, "Some Linguistic Features of Negro Dialect," pp. 61-63.

Most, if not all, of the instances of been in the present corpus seem to correspond to Standard English have been. Several examples, in fact, co-occur with have.

I've had a dog ever since I've been born. Every one of 'em been German, too. 9 W 10 M

Not that I was really scared. I haven't been in, ah... I been in plenty situations that I was scared and I didn't know what wa' going to happen. Ah, I been in situations as ah, maybe I did something wrong and I didn't know what wa' going to happen. 16 N 8 F

Other examples likewise seem to correspond to Standard English have been; a few correspond to the third person singular form has been.

She been to the doctor. 30 N 1 F

My sister been bugging my mother about it, 'cause she love horses. 37 N 1 F

I been there s...a week. 31 N 1 M

I been over to Old Dominion, and that has the same smell. 32 W 1 M

I been here just last whole year. 11 N 8 F

I been to Washington before. 21 N 6 M

We don't travel much. That's the only place I been. 21 N 6 M

I been going to Titus for...this my sixth year. 20 N 6 M

I been in some talent shows. 20 N 6 M

We been to City Park, the museum, that's all, I think. 18 N 6 F

I been liking that since I been in school. 8 N 10 F

There were no clear-cut cases of the use of been as an indicator of completive remote past action. Three examples which might be so interpreted might equally well be considered as examples of the deletion of some form of have.

She say, "What're you doing in there?"
 "I been takin' (taken) a bath." 37 N 1 F

Heath ask the little boy how long his mother been gone.
 20 N 6 M

The final example might be interpreted as deletion of has or 's:

It been 'bout two-three years ago. 2 N 10 M

The use of been does not seem to be markedly socially or ethnically stratified. It occurred in the speech of two informants in Group I, three in Group II, five in Group III, and three in Group IV.

Three items in the word games elicited been or has been. (See Appendix B, Norfolk Dialect Study Questionnaire, Part II, Section Items G, J, and L, p.) All informants except first-graders responded to this set of verbal cues. Item G, which involves the use of been as a marker of remote aspect, elicited one response of been from a Group IV informant, puzzled looks from the others, and a comment from one that he had never heard anybody talk like that before. For items J and L, responses of been were recorded for one of the eight informants in Group I, one of the five in Group II, two of the six in Group III, and three of the nine in Group IV. The been responses show generally the same pattern of distribution as the occurrences of been in the speech of the informants.

Non-Agreement of Person and Number

Very little attention has been paid in previous studies to the non-agreement of person and number in the copula, except for such generalizations as the following:

Some speakers [of non-standard Negro dialects] show no agreement when full forms of to be are used. The past tense is was regardless of the subject When the full form of the present tense form is used, is is used by these speakers for all persons.³

In the present corpus there were seventeen informants who used was or were where Standard English requires were or are. Four informants used forms which did not agree with the plural or compound subject after the filler subject there.

There was lots of people to play with. 36 W 1 F

There's not many kids 'round my neighborhood. 19 W 6 M

There's a lot things I like about it. 27 W 6 M

I guess there's two groups. 3 W 10 M

The absence of concord in this construction, which is a special category, occurred only in the speech of Group I informants.

The other thirteen informants used non-agreeing forms in a number of syntactic patterns, many of them after plural pronouns or you.

We was living Virginia Beach. 29 N 1 M

We was in the volleyball. 21 N 6 M

My brother used to know it when we was little. 19 W 6 M

We was on the mats during wrestling. 10 N 10 M

(Singing) I was your woman and you was my man. 35 N 1 M

Was you jumping up and clapping your hands? 35 N 1 M

They was neat. 35 N 1 M

They was looking for his sister, Ellabella. 20 N 6 M

I know one time they went up there, it rain off and on for 'bout two weeks while they was up there. 14 N 8 M

³Fasold and Wolfram, *ibid.*, p. 69.

A few others used singular forms after compound subjects:

Me and Mark was playing. 38 W 1 M

I think Daphne and Quentin's gonna get married. 1 W 10 F

and still others, after plural nouns.

I know what plums is. 30 N 1 F

Then the Browns was losing. 39 N 1 M

The Indians is on that...on Daniel Boone. 33 N 1 F

His feet is white. 7 N 10 F

Guys that's in the service and stuff, you know, come home.
6 N 10 M

They found out who the contacts was, where they brought it in,
stuff like that. 15 N 8 F

Non-agreement after there, which is a special case, occurred only in Group I and Group II white informants' speech, does not seem to be socially stratified, and may even be considered acceptable usage. The other type of non-agreement was found among five Group II speakers, three in Group III, and five in Group IV; it occurred in white speech as well as the speech of Negroes. Although such non-agreement is neither standard nor prestigious, its use is not socially or ethnically restricted.

wa' /were with Singular Subjects

Another type of non-agreement that recurred frequently in the sample is the use of were or wa' after singular subjects, where Standard English requires was. This non-standard usage, which does not appear to be mentioned in previous studies, occurred more frequently than the use of was for were. The pronunciation of wa' is identical to the pronunciation of were /wa/ in Norfolk speech, but, as the representation of the following

examples suggests, /wə/ may result from phonological deletion of the final consonant in was, producing homonyms for the singular and plural past tense forms. A number of informants who used this form, however, articulated the /r/ appropriate to were before vowels, so the alternative explanation of /wə/ as were should not be ruled out. If /wə/ or /wer/ does not result from phonological deletion of s in was, it might be accounted for as hypercorrection. It is also possible that there are semantic distinctions between /wə/ and was which do not exist in Standard English.

A few examples of /wə/ for Standard English was co-occur with was and suggest the phonological interpretation.

You know who it wa'? It was me in the bed. 34 N 1 M

I say I wa' 'bout six years old, maybe five, 'cause I wasn't in school yet, I don't think. N 8 M

Most of the examples, however, could be interpreted either way. The form /wə/ occurred especially frequently after singular personal pronouns.

(Singing) I wa' blind to let you go... 35 N 1 M

Only thing I wa' trying to do wa' help. 21 N 6 M

I thought I wa' gonna drown. 15 N 8 M

I wa' planning to go out for wrestling. 2 N 10 M

I wa' just waiting to see what wa' gonna happen after I got there. 16 N 8 F

One time I wa' kinda scared. 15 N 8 M

My oldest sister, when she wa' a baby, she cried too much. 30 N 1 F

She wa' out. 29 N 1 M

She say she wa' gonna buy me uh, a army suit. 34 N 1 M

He wa' a brown ghost. 29 N 1 M

He wa' acting all silly. He wa' dress all like a lady.
21 N 6 M

One time he wa' playing Jo...Geraldine, Geraldine. 25 N 6 M

I think he wa' half collie, half German Shepherd. 28 N 6 M

He told me he wa'...threaten he wa' gonna get me. I thought
he wa' playing. 13 N 8 M

He wa' coming up. 10 N 10 M

It wa' just plain old dog, that's all I know. 2 N 10 M

It wa' on Wide World of Sport. It wa' on Saturday. 20 N 6 M

It also occurred after the filler subjects there and it and in
other syntactic patterns where Standard English requires was.

It wa' raining and thunder. 21 N 6 M

He rode around one midnight, tell the people the soldier
were coming, because they were, 'cause there wa' gonna be
a war. 18 N 6 F

They found the stuff where King Tut wa' buried. 21 N 6 M

I didn't know what wa' gonna be happening. 16 N 8 F

That wa' pretty good. 2 N 10 M

That wa' the girl name, Katie. 28 N 6 M

Ellabella wa' looking for 'em. 20 N 6 M

Christmas everybody wa' gone on vacation. 12 N 8 M

The use of wa' or were /wə/ with singular subjects occurred in the speech
of fourteen informants. It was not found in white speech, and seems to
be one of the few features of non-standard dialects which show clear-
cut ethnic stratification. There was no social stratification of this
feature among the Negro informants, occurring in the speech of half of
those in Groups II and III and six of the ten in Group IV.

Contractions

Non-standard contractions of the copula be fall into three categories: won't for wasn't, contraction of past-tense forms, and ain't. The use of ain't will be discussed in another chapter.⁴

Several of the informants who used wa' / were used the negative contracted form won't where Standard English calls for wasn't.

That won't no moon, that was ghost. 29 N 1 M

My seat won't high like his. 35 N 1 M

She won't mean to me, but she wa' mean, though. 15 N 8 M

These were Group III and Group IV informants.

The second type of non-standard contraction is the contraction of past-tense forms was and were.

When they did, there was a little cat, it's a black cat, it was Halloween Day, and they scared 'em all. 39 W 1 M

We had one big dog, he was this high. He's name Kelly. He's big as a cow. 39 W 1 M

We didn't know where our daddy's taking us, but then we found out. 37 N 1 F

I thought we're going to make it. 9 W 10 M

I's getting baby-sitted that night. 38 W 1 M

I's in the spelling bee last year. 18 N 6 F

The contraction of the past forms might be considered radically non-standard, since the resulting 's and 're are undistinguishable from the present tense forms. All of these cases, however, co-occurred with adverbs of past time or verb or be forms marked for past tense. These contractions occurred extremely rarely, and were more common in first-grade speech than that of other grade levels.

⁴See Chapter VIII: Negation, pp. 74, 76-77.

CHAPTER V

THIRD PERSON SINGULAR, PRESENT TENSE VERBS

The use of the base, or unmarked, form of verbs in the present tense with third person singular subjects occurred frequently in the corpus. This feature has received considerable attention in the literature on non-standard speech, especially that of disadvantaged Negroes. Robert Graves has listed the singular subject with an uninflected verb as one of the distinguishing characteristics of lower-class Negro speech, although a singular subject with don't also occurs in lower-class white speech.¹ William Slager observes that this non-standard usage is "clearly a social marker," since the inflection is entirely systematic for all English verbs except four, and that it is quite conspicuous because of the "high frequency in any sample of ordinary conversation." He also notes that "the use of he don't for he doesn't is found nationally as a marker of non-standard English."² Edmund Anderson has cited "the absence of a third person singular form of the . . . finite verb in the present tense" as one of the "most notable differences" between Negro non-standard dialect in Baltimore and Standard English.³

¹Robert L. Graves, "Language Differences among Upper- and Lower-class Negro and White Eighth Graders in East Central Alabama," p. 3653 A.

²William R. Slager, "Effecting Dialect Change Through Oral Drill," English Journal, LVI (November, 1967), 1172-73.

³Edmund Anderson, A Grammatical Overview of Baltimore Non-standard Negro English, p. 25.

Walter Wolfram's Detroit data indicate that the third person singular -s is absent from the grammar of lower-class Negro dialects,⁴ a view which he and Ralph Fasold have elaborated elsewhere. They warn that "it is important to realize that the -s suffix is not carelessly 'left off' by speakers of Negro dialect;" it is simply not obligatory in the grammar of non-standard speech. They further observe that other non-standard dialects do not share this feature of the unmarked present tense, with only one exception: "some other non-standard dialects of English lack the -s suffix only with auxiliary don't."⁵ Juanita Williamson's study of Memphis Negro speech indicates that the use or non-use of this tense marker varies according to the social status of the informant.⁶

Patterns of Unmarked Present Tense Verbs

Among the Norfolk informants, the auxiliary do often occurred with singular subjects in the present tense, third person. For a few informants the non-negative form do was unmarked.

How long do it take? 28 N 6 M

It just what a person do, you know. 6 N 10 M

That's all she do, is holler. 11 N 8 F

⁴Walter Wolfram, A Sociolinguistic Description of Detroit Negro Speech, pp. 134-41.

⁵Ralph Fasold and Walt Wolfram, "Some Linguistic Features of Negro Dialect," pp. 63-64.

⁶Juanita Williamson, The Speech of Negro High School Students in Memphis, Tennessee, p. 32.

Most of the examples of unmarked do, however, involved the negative form don't, the use of which corresponded to Standard English doesn't.

My daddy don't live with us. 29 N 1 M

She don't like chimps. 38 W 1 M

My mama say Channel Thirteen don't act right. 33 N 1 F

He don't stay with us. 22 N 6 F

He don't say "here" like us, he say it funny. I can't pronounce his way. 20 N 6 M

It don't matter how many. 10 N 10 M

Although have occurs as both a main verb and an auxiliary, the unmarked third person was found only when have was the main verb.

She have white-gray ones. 34 N 1 M

A teacher really have to keep his cool sometime. 6 N 10 M

She have five children. She come down sometimes. 7 N 10 F

He have horses and I love horses. 17 N 6 M

She have some people. 18 N 6 F

We have different job. Sometime we switch. Somebody have the bathroom, somebody have the kitchen and uh bedroom. 22 N 6 F

A special case of "unmarked" third person singular, present tense formation is the word say, which in Standard English changes the vowel to /ɛ/ besides adding the suffix /z/. Say was found to be the most frequently occurring unmarked present verb, although about half of the informants who used the third person form without the inflectional suffix changed the vowel (thus /sɛ/).

My mama say I color good. 33 N 1 F

Everybody say they gonna get her a present. 31 N 1 M

My sister always say your teacher's wrong if she say
 "te-ree." (/teri/ for tree) 37 N 1 F

I like when he say "Woooo!" 35 N 1 M

You gotta, you know, do what Simon says, like when Simon
 say stoop you stoop, and like when you say stand you
 'pose stand. 13 N 8 M

My mother say she gonna stop it. 15 N 8 M

Although it was found that for a number of informants the third person singular present inflection was categorically absent in their speech, there seems to be some significance in the patterning of the sounds after which the tense marker is absent in the speech of those informants who use it optionally. The s inflections is phonologically /s/ after voiceless stops and fricatives, /z/ after sibilants, and /z/ after vowels, voiced stops and fricatives, nasals, and laterals. Among informants who sometimes mark present-tense verbs, most of the unmarked forms are those which take the /z/ form of the inflection. Many of the unmarked present tense verbs, third person singular, ended in a vowel, especially long o (/o/), such as know, go, and throw.

He go with Felicia. 30 N 1 F

My sister know all those. 31 N 1 F

I got a lot o' hair when my hair grow back. 29 N 1 M

My uncle Conrad know it. 35 N 1 M

He throw hisself, he say "Woooo!" 35 N 1 M

She go to Madison. 33 N 1 F

Then it go straight off, hop off the track. 20 N 6 M

The person that's next to him, he go to the room and start
 telling about article he read. 18 N 6 F

My father, he go fishing. 26 N 6 F

But you know they had a rhyme that go along with it and
give you longer time. 6 N 10 M

There were also a few instances of unmarked present verbs after /e/,
which may be analogous to the present tense of say (that is, the /se/)
that corresponds to the Standard English says, as opposed to the
vowel-changed form /sə/.

My brother, he stay up in New York. 28 N 6 M

A boy name Roy Stevens, he play football all the time. 21 N 6 M

Another phonological environment in which the third person singular
morpheme seldom occurred was after nasals, which also take the /z/ shape
of the inflection. Most of these instances were with /m/, especially
with the lexical item seem; the phrase It seem like occurred frequently
enough to suggest that it is a petrified, or idiomatic, expression.

The way they work it, seem like they working. 16 N 8 F

It seem kinda stupid to some people, I guess. It seem that
maybe they feel that um they could talk any way they want to,
long as you understand what they're talking about. 14 N 8 M

It seem like I had more privileges. 7 N 8 F

When your birthday come you jump out. 33 N 1 F

I stay home now most the time, take company when company come
Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and once on school nights. 7 N 10 F

When he come in the ring an announcer gonna introduce both
of 'em like that. 15 N 8 M

They sound the same, but one mean like ah car in rows and one
is the flower. 20 N 6 M

The one that beat, the one that stay in, he win. 21 N 6 M

Sometime he bring he toys to school and we play with 'em. 34 N 1 M

(Singing "Down in the Valley")
 Down in the valley the mockingbird wing,
 Telling my story, here's what he sing. 27 N 1 F

It'll be more money if somebody land /l n/ on your property. 28 N 6 M

Still another place where the present tense inflection seldom occurred was after lateral (or /l/) sounds, in such words as call, tell, and feel.

I mean, sometime my mother might put up decoration, that's if she feel up to it.

They have to do everything the leader tell us to do. If she tell us, we have to paint. 22 N 6 F

Whatever it tell you to do, you gotta do it. 21 N 6 M

The quarterback call the play. 21 N 6 M

One day he tell us to show up there, he don't show up. 20 N 6 M

When we hiding and she can't find us she call us stupid and all like that. 26 N 6 F

Whoever call first bustes, busts in the pack. 15 N 8 M

The zero present also occurred frequently after /v/, as in live, give, love.

My grandmama live out in the country too. 31 N 1 M

My mama give me a coughdrop. 30 N 1 F

He live somewhere else. 29 N 1 M

My sister been bugging my mother about it 'cause she love horses. 37 N 1 F

She love me to be the ghost. 33 N 1 F

And she give you money, it's play money, some dollars. 33 N 1 F

We went to Indianapolis, Indiana. That's where my auntie live. 21 N 6 M

My aunt live in Baltimore. 20 N 6 M

Although the great majority of unmarked third person singular verbs are those which require the /z/ shape of the inflection, there were also a number of verbs ending in the voiceless stops, which require the /s/ allomorph.

He jump up to me and when I clap my hand he jump on me. 33 N 1 F

Yellow make me sick. 29 N 1 M

You roll the dice and see who get the high. 21 N 6 M

When she get in the middle of it she say "all eye on you."
18 N 6 F

She like to play hide and go seek and hopsco' and all like that. 26 N 6 F

She counts on up to ten, and then by the time she count to ten she start running behind us. 26 N 6 F

When you be asking her something she(s) screaming and stuff and make you sit down and all like that. 15 N 8 M

The fastest runner get to be it. 13 N 8 M

I like the part where the whole family get together and get to see everybody you ain't seen in year. 6 N 10 M

All that sort of stuff slip away, don't play it no more. 6 N 10 M

It look like you just miss all your old friends. 2 N 10 M

And when she hit the thing on this, she will ask you some questions. 35 N 1 M

Sometime ah she put the work up on the board, some time she doesn't put it up on the board so we can be faster with the brain and think for ourselves sometime. 37 N 1 F

Most of the unmarked present-tense verbs, however, occurred in the speech of informants who used the inflection only infrequently if at all.

There were also a number of instances of hypercorrection in the use of the third person singular, present tense morpheme. Most of these

involved the use of the s marker with plural subjects:

Usually just me and one o' his friends goes. 27 W 6 M

Most of 'em does. 39 W 1 M

Well, I draws. 31 N 1 M

My grandparents does. 26 N 6 F

Sometimes they takes thumbtacks and sets 'em in her seat,
sets 'em in her seat. 11 N 8 F

We just goes out there. 2 N 10 M

Sometimes my mother and my father plays. 36 W 1 F

Some of 'em stays, in, some of 'em come out. 11 N 8 F

Whitney tolds me a story 'cause Miss Allen gave me one
quarter. 29 N 1 M

There were also a few examples of the "wandering s," with the tense
marker being attached to a word other than the main verb.

My daddy don't live with us, he live somewhere else. My
daddy come overs ours house sometime in the night and
comes over in the morning sometime. 29 N 1 M

My father doesn't do much, he just stays around his office
and types and do works. 38 W 1 M

Although the hypercorrect forms are thought to indicate the instability
of the tense marker in non-standard dialects, some of the informants in
whose speech the feature occurred categorically inflected verbs in the
third person singular, present tense.

Social and Ethnic Distribution

Unmarked verbs in the present indicative, third person singular,
occurred in the speech of twenty-four informants. One white Group I

first-grader used don't with a singular subject; all the other twenty-three were Negroes. The only three exceptions among the Negro informants were a Group IV first-grader, a Group III eighth-grader, and a Group II tenth-grader.

For six of these twenty-three informants, the present tense marker was categorically absent in their speech. All of these six informants were elementary students, divided evenly between the first and sixth grades and scattered among the three groups which include Negro informants.

Conclusions

The use of present tense verbs, third person singular, without the Standard English -s inflection seems to be closely associated with the speech of Negro informants. An exception is the form don't, which occurred in the speech of one of the white informants.

Because of this tense marker categorically does not occur in the speech of some of the younger informants it may seem reasonable to conclude that its absence is a feature of non-standard grammar rather than phonology. An examination of the unmarked present forms in the speech of informants who use the marker in some situations suggests that phonology may influence the grammar, since the great majority of the uninflected forms among such speakers require the /z/ allomorph rather than /s/ or /ɪz/.

CHAPTER VI

PAST FORMS OF THE VERB

Verbs in the past tense and past participle forms occurred frequently in the speech of the informants without the Standard English -ed suffixes. The absence of these past markers has been discussed rather fully in many of the recent studies of non-standard speech, and most researchers feel that phonological rules govern the presence or absence of -ed. Apparently on the basis of Wolfram's Detroit findings,¹ which they restate, Fasold and Wolfram observe that

the -ed suffix which marks past tense and past participial forms, as well as derived adjectives, is sometimes not pronounced in Negro dialect because of pronunciation rules When -ed is added to a verb base ending in a consonant, as in missed, it can be removed by application of the consonant reduction rule. When -ed is added to a verbal base which ends in a vowel, it can be removed by the rule for deletion of syllable final d.

They add that the base forms ending in t or d usually take the /ɪd/ allomorph of the past marker in non-standard Negro speech, with the exception of start, the non-standard past forms of which are start, stard, or sta'. Verbs which are irregular in forming past tenses, they note, "distinguish present and past forms in the overwhelming majority of cases."²

¹Walter Wolfram, A Sociolinguistic Description of Detroit Negro Speech, pp. 58-84.

²Ralph Fasold and Walt Wolfram, "Some Linguistic Features of Negro Dialect," pp. 259-60.

A similar explanation is offered by Beryl Bailey, who describes the loss of the word-final stop consonants /d/ and /t/ in terms of "terminal fading" in non-standard Negro dialects: that is, the loss or weakening of a final consonant, final consonant cluster, or final syllable in a word.³

William Carroll and Irwin Feigenbaum offer a somewhat different explanation of the zero past allomorph:

The inflection of verbs for past tense occurs in the dialect. But the use of this inflection differs from its use in standard. Its use is partly determined by phonological rules: it occurs in the stream of speech before vowels, but not before consonants or silence—He passed out and He pass by. It seems further to be determined by the presence or absence of time adverbs and other contextual clues.⁴

Yet another description is offered by Juanita Williamson, who observes that "a zero allomorph / -∅ / occurs after bases ending in any sound; the past tense form is identical with the base form of the verb."⁵

Most of the studies of non-standard Negro speech treat the zero past inflections as a characteristic of "Black English." Susan Houston, for instance, suggests that "final stops which appear in White English do not appear in Black English;" such stops include /p/, /k/ as well as the past-tense markers /d/ and /t/.⁶

³Beryl Bailey, "Some Aspects of the Impact of Linguistics on Language Teaching in Disadvantaged Communities," pp. 571-72.

⁴William Carroll and Irwin Feigenbaum, Teaching a Second Dialect and Some Implications for TESOL, p. 33.

⁵Juanita Williamson, The Speech of Negro High School Students in Memphis, Tennessee, p. 32.

⁶Susan Houston, "A Sociolinguistic Consideration of the Black English of Children in Northern Florida," p. 603.

Melvin A. Butler observes that "only in the choice of verb forms is there a statistically significant difference between the educated and uneducated" Negroes who comprised his sample.⁷ Robert Graves, however, has described the use of the present tense form of the verb for non-present as a non-standard usage shared by lower-class whites and Negroes.⁸

Apparently, then, current scholarship is in considerable disagreement as to the precise rules governing the occurrence of the past markers, although the consensus is that the rules are phonological rather than grammatical, and non-standard rather than standard.

Patterns of Unmarked Past Tense Verbs

In the present corpus, the word which recurred without the past marker most frequently, and in the speech of the most informants, was the word start. None of the examples occurred in clause-final position or before a vowel.

My father taught me Chinese before I start school, but
when I start school I knew how to speak English too
'cause my sister and my brother, they were in school
before I was. 23 C 6 F

Then he saw 'em. Then he start chasing 'em. 28 N 6 M

One thing that I did know before I start that, studying 'bout
'em, is ah, is when they hatch some of 'em fly. 16 N 8 F

⁷Melvin Arthur Butler, "Lexical Usage of Negroes in Northeast Louisiana," Dissertation Abstracts, XXIX (July-September, 1968), 888 A.

⁸Robert L. Graves, Language Differences among Upper- and Lower-class Negro and White Eighth Graders in East Central Alabama, p. 3658 A.

They start playing. All the white ones tried to tackle Fat Albert and Fat Albert said, "I like to play football tackle."
39 W 1 M

That was the end. Everybody start crying. 35 N 1 M

She wa' talking about a lot o' killing and stuff. I don't know, look like my temper just pop, and then I just lost my breathing and everything. I start breathing hard. 2 N 10 M

He came up, start telling me he was gonna take me downtown. I just stood there frozen. 1 W 10 F

That's when we start, from the first grade on up. 11 N 8 F

Then I was lying there and my brother start laughing and I got up and said, "I going to fix you for that." 17 N 6 M

Then he told her. Then they start talking. 28 N 6 M

The day after Christmas we went over there. I start to stay a little bit longer. 20 N 6 M

Besides start, there were very few verbs ending in /d/ or /t/ which occurred without the past marker /ɪd/.

This white lady decide to open this pancake shop. 7 N 10 F

It all depend on the person and how much they knew about the game. 6 N 10 M

Another verb that occurred frequently without the past tense marker is say. Only rarely was say-past pronounced /sɛ/, as it might be expected to if phonological deletion of /d/ after a vowel holds true.

He say, "Yeah, I gotta go," like that. 28 N 6 M

When he touched her she say that she gonna tell Killer and and all that. 8 N 10 F

So when she die she say she wanted ah, a marching band, you know, and everything. 7 N 10 F

Then they were talking, so he say anytime you need me in emergency, just ring that bell. 21 N 6 M

He say after I fight Frazier we'll find out who the greatest fighter in the world. 21 N 6 M

I had fire all over me and I say, "OOOOOOH! It burns!
OOOH, I'm burning up!" 35 N 1 M

They thought everybody was gone and...gone somewhere. They
say, "Did you see what happened?" and he say, "Yes." 34 N 1 M

One night he say, "It's a snake in the bed, it's a snake in
the bed," and I had to get up and turn on the light and then
I say, "Ain't no snake in the bed." 34 N 1 M

All of the informants who used the unmarked form of say (/se/) did so
consistently; that is, /se/ did not alternate with /sɛd/ and seldom
alternated with /sɛ/.

A number of verbs ending with vowels were unmarked for past tense.
Many of these occurred before words beginning with vowels or in clause-
final position.

They didn't go home, they stay in the same city overnight. 20 N 7 M

But he's marry. He don't stay with us. 22 N 6 F

Their father die. They spent the night 'cause somebody
broke in their house so they came over, stayed over our
house. 39 W 1 M

He kept on following me every time I turn. 21 N 6 M

Her mother worry so much about her that she got sick. 7 N 10 F

I used to play hop step and jump and all that. I used to jump
rope a lot, I play hopscotch, and uh that was 'bout the only
thing I used to play when I was small. 11 N 8 F

They show replay o' Classius Clay and this man. I looked at
that mostly. 21 N 6 M

So when she die she say she wanted ah, a marching band,
you know, and everything else. 7 N 10 F

Other unmarked past forms occurred immediately before vowels and
immediately after various other consonants.

He wa' dress all like a lady. 21 N 6 M

This boy, he was dress up like an old lady. 40 W 1 F

They knew he had kill 'er when he pull out his gun and went to shoot the Bartleys. 20 N 6 M

I didn't have names for 'em. I just call 'em Ducky. 23 C 6 F

One day she call us stupid my mama came out. 26 N 6 F

My father isn't prejudice and he doesn't want for me to be. 23 C 6 F

My sister and I, we cook one Sunday. 22 N 6 F

They caught us. Car stopped, and he look all around the building. 19 W 6 M

If you get tag you gotta try to tag someone else. 39 W 1 M

About equally as many unmarked past forms occurred between consonants.

She just laugh when she found out but she didn't do anything else. 3 W 10 M

She did some sky-diving so she open her thing, then she went to the house. 26 N 6 F

The other guy push Bert out o' bed, so Bert slept under the bed. 39 W 1 M

He was park somewhere by the street. 21 N 6 M

I walk with Theresa last year. 40 W 1 F

Everybody look shock because you know she look, she look just like she was white. 7 N 10 F

A few others occurred in clause-final position, but following a variety of consonants.

Things have been change. 2 N 10 M

He got sick and then he pass. 1 N 8 F

She used to go with this other man, so she move. 28 N 6 F

Yeah, I used to live over there before I move. 12 N 8 M

Although none of the informants categorically excluded past-tense and past participle /d/ /t/ inflections, the phonological environment does

not seem to account for most of the unmarked forms which occurred.

The category of unmarked past forms which occurred least frequently and in the speech of the fewest informant was that of verbs which form the past tense irregularly, that is, in some other way beside the addition of a dental suffix.

That's where I first know how to swim. 21 N 6 M

When he wanted some she give it to us just a little at a time. 18 N 6 F

Then soon as he sold it to him he give him some gold. 21 N 6 M

I played, I sing. 35 N 1 M

He build a fire out o' his mouth and the burned a house up. 34 N 1 M

Little Miss Muffin sat on a tuffet
Eating her carrots and whale,
Down came a spider and sit down beside her
And frighten Miss Muffin away. 34 N 1 M

A usage that seems to be related to the unmarked past is the shifting of tense from past tense at the beginning of a narrative, to historical present in the main action being narrated, and back to past tense at the conclusion.

My cousin, he climbed up in a tree with me. We make a sharp stick and we, we found 'im laying right where he was, and my cousin ran down and took it real fast and almost bit 'im, and we made it on the can, and we sharpen it real good, and we stabbed it in the guts, and it went up the tree, and we threw it straight down and hit 'im between the eyes and he fell right off. 39 W 1 M

One time my mother found this black kitten but she ah, she brought him in, and she had a box. She puts him in the box and fixes it up with her old stuff, you know, puts the sheets and stuff in it, and at night we used to let him come in. But sometimes he used to go "Meow" and sometime it used to wake us up. 37 N 1 F

It was their family that moved in, and he talks to 'em and

tells 'em they'll have to get 'em out, and all this, and he says...he's real funny...but then he goes, he says, "There's not a chicken shack in miles of here." And then the guy goes, "Well, Loooordy-May, what're we gonna do?" And he goes, "What do you mean, what're we gonna do?" And then the guy told him, "Our family moved in." 24 W 6 M

It was day before yesterday. We were on the bus, and the bus driver comes up on the railroad crossing and stops, and there's a train about five feet away, coming. And finally he got started up again and went down the road a bit, and the train just missed the back end of the bus, and that's where we were all sitting. 9 W 10 M

Although there were relatively few clear-cut cases of the use of the historical present in story-telling, the pattern recurred often enough to suggest that for some informants who do not mark present tense, third person singular verbs,⁸ the unmarked verbs may correspond to Standard English present rather than past tense.

Social and Ethnic Distribution of Unmarked Past Tense Verbs

Verbs unmarked for the past tense occurred in the speech of twenty-nine informants: four in Group I, eight in Groups II and III, and nine in Group IV. A slightly higher proportion of Negro informants (80.7 %) used the unmarked forms than non-Negro informants (61.6 %). The word say was unmarked for past tense only in the speech of Negro informants; other unmarked past forms occurred in the speech of those of both ethnic groups. Although the unmarked forms occurred in the speech of informants at all four grade levels, there were relatively fewer examples from tenth-graders than from the younger informants.

⁸See Chapter V: Third Person Singular Present Tense Verbs, pp. 51-59.

Conclusions

Because unmarked past-tense forms of verbs were found in the speech of the majority of the informants (72.5 %), it seems likely that this feature may be subject to the influence of regional pronunciation. Phonological deletion of the dental suffix, however, does not seem to be a workable explanation for a great many of the examples that occurred in the corpus. Phonological and grammatical rules seem to intersect in governing the occurrence of unmarked verbs in the past tense. The feature also seems to be slightly stratified by ethnic group, social status, and age.

CHAPTER VII
OTHER VERB USAGES

In addition to the unmarked past and present forms already noted, there were other non-standard usages in the verb system which occurred in the speech of the informants. These involved will and would and other auxiliaries, and the use of Standard English past tense forms as participles and vice versa.

would and will

The non-occurrence of the forms will and would where Standard English requires them has received little or no attention except in relationship to the form be.¹ The same processes which allow the deletion of these forms (or at least do not require their occurrence) with the form be might reasonably be assumed to operate with other verb forms.

A number of statements that seem to correspond to Standard English future or conditional occur without will or would. A few of these correspond to simple future and apparently result from loss of will or its contraction 'll.

It came on last night and it continue Monday. 20 N 6 M

As a senior I probably go in. 7 N 10 F

I think I probably reach that goal. 16 N 8 F

¹See Chapter III: Invariant be, pp. 33-34.

I want to be a doctor, but if I don't be a doctor I go in the service. 20 N 6 M

Fieldworker: Do you want to ride a motorcycle?

Informant: No, I ride a police car. 35 N 1 M

Then you probably get wrong ones. 35 N 1 M

Two of the questions asked in every interview involved the use of would: "What would you do if you had all the money you could spend?" and "Where would you go if you could take trips anywhere you wanted to?" The responses were expected to be expressed with would, but this was not always the case. Underlying would seems to be a justifiable assumption for these instances, however, not only on the basis of the phrasing of these questions, but also because some of the examples co-occurred with would or its contraction 'd.

Lot o' places I'd like to go, but I don't know, just don't get chance to go. Ah, I mean, foreign countries, stuff like that. I mean, I just like to go, probably to sight-seeing, stuff like that. 2 N 10 M

First off, I'd buy my mumma a house and then I'd buy me, buy me ah two cars, one for my mumma, one for my...one for me. Then I buy my brother ah bicycles and buy my sister a bicycle, and that's all. 15 N 8 M

I would go to New York, Washington...I been to Washington before. I go to North Carolina, South Carolina. I go all over the world and see the monuments and stuff. 21 N 6 M

I'd like to go to Washington, D. C., and ah...mmm...that's about the only place I like to go. 11 N 8 F

I probably put it to good use. I probably donate it to charities, maybe. I don't know. I don't know 'zactly where I do with it, probably live it up like everybody else would, I guess. 14 N 8 M

Other examples which do not co-occur with some form of would seem to follow the same pattern as those that do.

Well, I put some of it in stock, most of it in stock. I give my mother some of it. 7 N 10 F

I go Hawaii. 13 N 8 M

I get a German Shepherd, a greyhound, or a great Dane. 20 N 6 M

I buy me a home, then I buy me a car, and save some of it. 22 N 6 F

I go to New York, Philadelphia, and see the Jackson Five and see the Osmond Brothers. 35 N 1 M

Most the times I go play football and buy me lots o' stuff, like cars, a house, buy me some food. 39 W 1 M

I say I wa' 'bout six years old, maybe, 'cause I wasn't in school yet, I don't think. 14 N 8 M

I'm planning at least on going to college. And, and ah if, if I don't chance to go there, I'm still going to nursing school, but ah I like to go to Hampton Institute. This I think is a beautiful school. 16 N 8 F

The deletion of will or would occurred in the speech of thirteen informants, eleven Negroes and two whites. Both of the white informants were first-graders of Group II. Five of the Negroes were in the eighth grade. There was no marked pattern of distribution of this feature by social status group except that it did not occur in Group I speech.

Other Auxiliaries

Non-standard usage of other auxiliaries occurred only four times in the interviews.

It might don't happen. 22 N 6 F

We just kept her 'cause you know children may would ha' killed her, she was so little. 20 N 6 M

Well, I may can change history. Maybe they can try it, but I don't think they can. 8 N 10 F

My brother done tore 'em up. 25 N 6 M

The infrequency of these forms makes the distribution analysis a moot point. It might be noted, however, that three of the four informants who used these forms were sixth-graders, and that all of them were Negroes.

Past Participial Forms as Finite Verbs

A few informants used Standard English past participles as finite verbs in the past tense.

He run back in the house. 31 N 1 M

She rung the bell. 21 N 6 M

Well, most o' my cats got killed and I given my puppy away and my bird got out in the house and I can't find him. 26 N 6 F

Everything just gotten dark all of a sudden. 2 N 10 M

She went to their secret cave and she seen 'em in there fighting. 21 N 6 M

We seen a lot o' cats like her that could ha' been her but we didn't go bother. 21 N 6 M

Yeah, I seen one lately. 14 N 8 M

With the exception of seen, this type of non-standard usage was extremely rare. It occurred only in the speech of five informants, all Negroes; four of the five were elementary students (sixth grade).

Past Tense Forms as Past Participles

Where some informants use past participles as past tense forms, other informants use past tense forms of the verb as past participles.

Some of these non-standard usages occurred in passive constructions with got.

She found another dog, a white one, but he got ran over.
22 N 6 F

They got ran over. 25 N 6 M

My cousin, he got he nose broke playing football so I don't play football much. 12 N 8 M

The others occurred after one of the forms of have.

Well, I dreamed that um this man had broke in our house.
17 N 6 M

Have you saw this bike that's got one side on it and one side on the other? 33 N 1 F

They didn't know Ellabella had came back. 20 N 6 M

That play must ha' took to four thirty from five o'clock in the morning. 32 W 1 M

(Hide and Seek rhyme:)

I spy,

Stick in my eye,

Who has stole my apple pie? 33 N 1 F, 34 N 1 M

The nine informants who used such forms were all Negroes. One was an eighth-grader, the others were evenly divided between sixth and first grade.

CHAPTER VIII

NEGATION

Two types of non-standard negation, the use of ain't and the multiple negative construction, occurred in the speech of the Norfolk informants. Both have been discussed in previous studies.

Beryl Bailey has noted that "ain't is used consistently in non-verbal predications and before the tense markers; it also seems to be the form used before the -ing form of the verb."¹ While Bailey's study was concerned with Negro English, Robert Graves' work with lower-class whites and Negroes indicated that the occurrence of ain't was a marker of low social status for both ethnic groups.² Susan Houston observed that for her young Negro informants "in negation, forms of have or be followed by a negative become ain't."³ Edmund Anderson has remarked that "most commonly, the contracted negative particle occurs with the copula as ain't," as does the auxiliary be with the negative, which is also usually ain't in the present tense. He also observes that the negative form of have likewise is ain't. Furthermore, according to Anderson, word order in negative sentences can be reversed if a negative

¹Beryl Bailey, "Toward a New Perspective in Negro English Dialectology," p. 176.

²Robert L. Graves, "Language Differences among Upper- and Lower-class Negro and White Eighth Graders in East Central Alabama," p. 3658 A.

³Susan Houston, "A Sociolinguistic Consideration of the Black English of Children in Northern Florida," p. 603.

subject co-occurs with ain't and other negative auxiliaries.⁴

Ralph Fasold and Walt Wolfram have added that "in some varieties of Negro dialect, ain't also corresponds to standard English didn't," although it usually corresponds to the negative of be or have.

They also mention that "although ain't is used by educated speakers in casual conversation in some parts of the country, the use of ain't . . . is one of the clearest and most universal markers of nonstandard speech of all types."⁵

Multiple negation, or the use of "double negatives," seems to be at least as complex a usage as ain't. Fasold and Wolfram, in a detailed analysis of negative placement rules in Standard English and its non-standard counterparts, have explained that the rules of non-standard dialect allow "copying" of the negative in indefinite words which co-occur with not, whereas standard dialects attach the negative marker only to one word in the sentence, either the marker not or in transforming a positive indefinite to a negative form. As they put it, "the multiple negative expressions are simply different ways of copying the one basic sentence-negating not;" there is really only one negative in such constructions, which "is expressed in more than one place in the sentence."⁶ Houston observed that this non-standard

⁴Edmund Anderson, A Grammatical Overview of Baltimore Non-standard Negro English, pp. 72-78.

⁵Ralph Fasold and Walt Wolfram, "Some Linguistic Features of Negro Dialect," p. 69.

⁶Ibid., pp. 70-76.

construction was "standard usage" among her informants,⁷ and Joan Baratz has mentioned that the use of double negatives is among the most important differences between white suburban and Negro urban speech,⁸ although Graves has noted that the use of double negatives is characteristic of lower-class speech of both Negroes and whites.⁹

Patterns of Non-standard Negation

Among the Norfolk informants, ain't usually corresponds to Standard English isn't or am not in simple negation.

My English ain't all that dynamite, but I don't try to say the wrong things all the time. 6 N 10 M

I ain't going to school tomorrow. 30 N 1 F

That ain't my brother. 29 N 1 M

I do whatever I do. I do it by myself or I ain't gonna do it. 6 N 10 M

Sometimes ain't corresponds to the negative form of have, but less frequently.

She wa' gonna have some babies, and so she went away, and we ain't seen her since. 20 N 6 M

For a few speakers, ain't is a simple negative marker corresponding to Standard English do with the negative.

⁷Houston, "A Sociolinguistic Consideration of the Black English of Children in Northern Florida," p. 603.

⁸Joan Baratz, A Bi-Dialectal Test for Determining Language Proficiency, pp. 5-13.

⁹Graves, "Language Differences among Upper- and Lower-class Negro and White Eighth Graders in East Central Alabama," p. 3658 A.

It had some black stuff on it, so I ain't eat it. 35 N 1 M

I ain't, but I thought I wa' gonna drown. 15 N 8 M

I ain't got no toys. 29 N 1 M

Most of the examples of ain't co-occurred with another negative.

In multiple negation involving ain't, it usually corresponds to the negative form of have.

I ain't never heard people talk like that. 6 N 10 M

If you ain't got no house on it, they pay you double for the lot you on. 21 N 6 M

I ain't had no dress on. 35 N 1 M

If you ain't got no place, then go 'head and find a place, or you go around the base. 34 N 1 M

You ain't got no phone. 30 N 1 F

I ain't seed no murch before. 29 N 1 M

I ain't been to none yet. 21 N 6 M

There were few examples of ain't as the negative of be in double negation.

She put lipstick on and I say, "Aretta, why don't you take that stuff off?" And she say, "That ain't nothing," and I say "That's for grown people." 33 N 1 F

The great majority of the double negatives involved the use of the negative marker not with the indefinite pronouns nothing and nobody.

It wasn't nothing much. 1 W 10 F

They don't have nothing on they head. 29 N 1 M

It's surprising when you hear about 'em, the good sweet little guys who didn't do nothing. 4 W 10 F

It would be interesting if something happened, even though I don't want nothing to happen to 'em. 5 W 10 F

We don't look up to nobody. 7 N 10 F

I don't go anywhere but two of my sisters went to New York and then my brother went to New York and everybody else don't go nowhere. 12 N 8 M

I didn't get nothing but my birthstone ring, my identification bracelets, some clothes and a tape recorder. 12 N 8 M

Then if he bust the pack open then he don't get nothing. 15 N 8 M

His son didn't shoot nothing 'cause they got up on a deer and he shot it and missed it. 28 N 6 M

She didn't say nothing, she told me to stop playing. 25 N 6 M

You don't say nothing, you just jump. 34 N 1 M

She didn't buy nothing and she took my soda, drunk it, and I beat her up. 35 N 1 M

The second most productive type of double negation involved the use of not with no.

He told him not to mess with his wife no more. 28 N 8 M

I can't remember no more. 7 N 10 F

She didn't say anything, she just say don't scare her like that no more. 20 N 6 M

I used to be but I'm not no more. 6 N 10 M

He used to whip us then 'cause we didn't do no homework. 28 N 6 M

All that sort of stuff slip away, don't play it no longer. 6 N 10 M

Fieldworker: Do they still go trick or treat?

Informant: Yes, but not no more. My mum...my mother say she gonna stop it. 15 N 8 M

I don't have no costume. 33 N 1 F

You not supposed to let no one get yours. 36 W 1 F

We didn't keep 'em no more'n 'bout a year, I guess. 13 N 8 M

Another type of multiple negation involved the co-occurrence of not with the negative adverbs hardly and barely.

You didn't get hardly any time to talk to many people 'cause you just stay in your classroom. 18 N 6 F

Well, I can't remember hardly any of 'em. 27 W 6 M

Then she start saying some stupid words that we can't hardly stomach. 26 N 6 F

I don't think they hardly feed him. 28 N 6 M

Well, there's nobody hardly in our block except Orvis Wade, but we never hardly see any of each other. 27 W 6 M

The teacher won't barely know I'm in there 'less she ask me a question or something, 'cause most of the time I'm busy trying to find out what we gonna do or doing something else I had to do following night. 16 N 8 F

Sometimes negative adverbs co-occurred with two other negatives to produce triple negation.

Doctors don't hardly make no money. 35 N 1 M

In Norfolk you can't hardly go fishing or nothing. You have to go out in a boat. 21 N 6 M

So I stay home most o' the time now. I don't go nowhere hardly. 7 N 10 F

Most informants used regular word order in negative statements, although a few used inverted word order. All of these examples were multiple negatives.

Ain't nothing up there I like much. 26 N 6 F

Then I say, "Ain't no snake in the bed." 34 N 1 M

Then, you know, after the man taught him how to box couldn't nobody beat him. 10 N 10 M

Fieldworker: Is there anyone who's a leader?

Informant: I don'...no, ain't nobody. 25 N 6 M

Social and Ethnic Distribution

The form ain't occurred in the speech of eight informants, all Negroes. Of this total, one was in Group II, four were in Group III, and three were in Group IV. It should be noted, however, that five of the eight were first-graders; there was one at each of the other three grade levels.

Multiple negatives occurred much more frequently than ain't. This feature was found in the speech of twenty-three informants, both white and Negro. Three informants in Group I, six in Group II, six more in Group III, and eight in Group IV used multiple negations in their speech. Four, or 30%, of the white informants did so, as opposed to nineteen, or 73%, of the Negro informants.

Conclusions

The distribution of the form ain't suggests that it is most common in the speech of Negro first-graders, although it also occurs in the speech of older informants. Few informants use ain't, however, in contrast to multiple negation, which was found in the speech of a little more than half of the total sample. Proportionately more Negroes used this construction than whites, although there seems to be no marked stratification of this item by social-status group.

CHAPTER IX

PLURAL FORMATION

One of the more frequently recurring features of non-standard s speech found in the Norfolk study is the zero, or unmarked, plural, which may be defined as the base form of the noun without the -s inflection that is obligatory for expressing plurality in Standard English. A number of the studies of non-standard Negro dialects have characterized the zero plural as a diagnostic feature of non-standard Negro English.

Beryl Bailey suggests that the -s plural marker is optional in non-standard Negro speech.¹ William Carroll and Irwin Feigenbaum have postulated a rule to account for the use or non-use of the plural -s inflection: "nouns preceded by a word indicating plurality, such as numerals and other qualifiers, are not inflected for plurality," but "when there is no such indicator, the noun is marked." Walt Wolfram and Ralph Fasold, however, dispute this claim as "invalid." They further remark that the zero plural is "part of the grammar of a

¹Beryl Loftman Bailey, "Some Aspects of the Impact of Linguistics on Language Teaching in Disadvantaged Communities," Elementary English, XLV (May, 1968), p. 573 and p. 576.

²William S. Carroll and Irwin Feigenbaum, Teaching English as a Second Dialect and Some Implications for TESOL, ERIC Document ED 015 479 (1967), p. 34.

number of white regional dialects," but seems to occur particularly frequently in the speech of young Southern Negro children.³

Besides the zero plural, other non-standard plural formations occurred, such as double plurals and -s marking of "irregular" plurals (which do not form plurals in Standard English by the -s inflection). Anderson, in a detailed treatment of non-standard plural formation, describes the zero plurals and the regularization of "irregular" nouns in terms of a different classification system for nouns in the dialect.⁴ He also postulates hypercorrection as the reason for double-plural formation,⁴ a position that is elaborated by Walter Wolfram.⁵

Syntactic Patterning of Unmarked Plurals

In the present corpus, many of the unmarked plurals co-occurred with quantifiers. Some of these were numerical quantifiers.

First you gotta go to four years in college, and then
you have to study four more year to be a oceanographer.
19 W 6 M

³Walt Wolfram and Ralph Fasold, "Some Linguistic Features of Negro Dialect," p. 78.

⁴Edmund Anderson, A Grammatical Overview of Baltimore Non-standard Negro English, pp. A1-A6.

⁵Walter A Wolfram, A Sociolinguistic Description of Detroit Negro Speech, p. 136.

⁶Walter Wolfram and Ralph Fasold, "Some Linguistic Features of Negro Dialect," p. 85, n. 5.

⁷Ibid., pp. 43, 46-47.

It's about these two outlaw who want amnesty. 23 C 6 F

He'd take us over there 'cross the hall in the library,
lock the door, beat us on the head 'bout five, six time.
28 N 6 M

You get 'bout three...three or two o' them thing. 28 N 6 M

Like it's two person, like me...like another person and I.
15 N 8 M

It's not by our house, it's 'bout five mile, ten mile away.
9 W 10 M

You know, now everything is R or X or triple R or four
hour. 6 N 10 M

This other boy came in for him and caught every ball came
to him and knock three hole in his head. 25 N 6 M

My two baby sister got the same thing. 31 N 1 M

He got to run all the way around five time. 21 N 6 M

But he older than two month, 'bout six month old. 21 N 6 M

Whitney had two quarter. Miss Allen gave him two quarter
to give 'em to Whitney. 29 N 1 M

If you get four railroad, person landing on it have to pay
you eight hundred dollar, two hundred apiece. 28 N 6 M

You deal out each player fifteen hundred dollar. 20 N 6 M

A second set of quantifiers are non-numerical, and consist of such
phrases as some of, all of, a lot of.

The teacher she ask us some question and some of 'em
we have to answer 'em on sheets, some of 'em we answer
you know just out loud. 11 N 8 F

The people ask you some question. 37 N 1 F

Got any more question? 6 N 10 M

I know all my number. 35 N 1 M

You draw line, and you put number all the way up to hundred,
and if you jump all the way up to a hundred you win the game.
22 N 6 F

I don't know no more thing. 33 N 1 F

I think a lot o' thing, but sometime they don't happen.
21 N 6 M

You talking 'bout playing you know tag and thing. 8 N 10 F

That's about all the game I can think of that we used to play. 6 N 10 M

We wouldn't play anything but ah at home we play a lot o' game. 8 N 10 F

My sister and I played up...upstairs in the hall. We play ah hide and seek, other game. 7 N 10 F

They play all kinda game. 20 N 6 M

Almeda and I, we were friends since we's in the first grade, and the sixth grade, and all the class together.
7 N 10 F

Fieldworker: What did you do Christmas?

Informant: Go out different place, go to church, stuff like that. 10 N 10 M

Fieldworker: What did you get for Christmas?

Informant: A pair o' skate, a sweater, and a...necklace.
13 N 8 M

I liked all o' my teacher. 20 N 6 M

Most all my friend up in my class. 20 N 6 M

Some boy got their contract. 20 N 6 M

Of the examples of zero plurals which co-occurred with quantifiers, about the same number occurred with numerals as with non-numerical plural-marking phrases.

Another set of zero plurals which might be considered marked for plurality consists of those which co-occur with plural pronouns. Some of these unmarked nouns are antecedents for the plural pronoun they.

Japanese cat they got five lives 'cause they always die a lot. 39 W 1 M

I think a lot o' thing, but sometime they don't happen. Like, you think the good thing, but they don't happen all the time. 21 N 6 M

He rode around one midnight tell the people the soldier were coming, because they were. 18 N 6 F

Teacher really got to know what they're doing. 6 N 10 M

Gym teacher they yell all the time. 6 N 10 M

Others co-occur with the possessive plural pronoun their or its non-standard equivalent they.

Their real name are Kit Curry and Hannibal Hayes. 23 C 6 F

The women wear kinda masks over their mouth. 27 W 6 M

Some boy got their contract. 20 N 6 M

I don't know their name, though. 15 N 8 M

They ask me to hang up they coat sweater. 33 N 1 F

Others are modified by the adjectival pronoun them, which is a non-standard plural form corresponding to Standard English those.

I had a costume, you know, like Batman wear, they got them thing hanging down. 35 N 1 M

They take them thing and shoot 'em in the stomach. 33 N 1 F

Fieldworker: What did you get for Christmas?

Informant: A model airplane, one them little airplane with gas in it. 12 N 8 M

These co-occurring plural forms are contextual clues which, like the quantifiers, indicate plurality of nouns. This type of plural marking, however, has apparently not been previously discussed in studies of non-standard plural formation.

While there were many instances of zero plural that co-occurred with quantifiers and plural pronouns, equally as many zero plurals

did not. Context indicates the corresponding Standard English form would be marked with the plural morpheme. Some of these unmarked plurals were in apposition to a series (compound noun phrase).

Yes, we have tall guy, a boy name Reginald Brown, a boy name Sidney. 20 N 6 M

Fieldworker: What does your teacher holler about?

Informant: Either getting out of your seat, not raising your hand, thing like that. 19 W 6 M

Fieldworker: What do they have there?

Informant: Well, a lotta books he wrote and cures for some diseases, thing like that. 24 W 6 M

You mean outside games, right? Football, basketball, dodgeball, softball, game like that. 6 N 10 M

You mean class? Math, English, science, biology. 10 N 10 M

Others are linked to a form of the copula to a plural or a compound noun phrase, or co-occur with are or were.

Bernadine and me twin. 30 N 1 F

They were tennis champion. 23 C 6 F

Teacher gonna holler at you, you know how teacher are. 6 N 10 M

Still others occurred in phrases which, in Standard English, always occur with the plural marker.

I cook, ah, meat loaf and spaghetti and meat ball. 7 N 10 F

You like sweet potato with syrup? 29 N 1 M

When I clap my hand he jump on me. 18 N 6 F

We sposed to buy a home out Poplar Hall. 20 N 6 M

Fieldworker: What do you like to do best?

Informant: Play with Lincoln Log. 34 N 1 M

The remaining instances of unmarked plurals seem, on the basis of various syntactic and semantic evidence, to correspond to the

marked plurals in Standard English.

He bump into people car. 30 N 1 F

They had a lot o' treasuries and stuff a long time ago
a lot o' people have found, a lot o' tombs and stuff
and coffin. 21 N 6 M

They keep asking her question to which they know the
answer. 20 N 6 M

I'd start buying thing for my family. 10 W 6 M

He would misbehave and throw spitball and everything.
23 C 6 F

Some children take egg, some children take ashes. 22 N 6 F

Several informants mentioned that they were taking "social study,"
which corresponds to the Standard English plural form.

One other item of non-standard plural formation should be
mentioned here. Several Negro elementary level informants used the
plural form of house with the -s plural attached to the singular form
without changing the /s/ in house to /z/; i.e., /hausiz/, as opposed
to the Standard English /hauziz/.

One group of zero plurals are perhaps better described as
ambiguous in grammatical number. The corresponding forms in Standard
English would be marked either with the plural morpheme or with the
singular non-definite article a/an.

Gomer Pyle do funny thing. 30 N 1 F

He chase girl home. 30 N 1 F

When it's Christmas she gives surprise. 39 W 1 M

Sometimes he bring airplanes and cars and truck. 34 N 1 M

I'd rather have big dog. 19 W 6 M

Well, we have custom on New Year's Day. 23 C 6 F

Christmas we give money too. We don't buy present. 23 C 6 F

We play word game and all like that. 26 N 6 F

Fieldworker: If somebody wants to join your group, what do they have to do?

Informant: Just hang around us sometimes, go to basketball game with us, and ah come on a basketball court sometime. 16 N 8 M

We don't have any relatives in Norfolk, but we go to friends' house. 8 N 10 F

Fieldworker: What subjects are you taking?

Informant: The usual subjects. I'm taking a reading course, though. That's all, the usual course. 14 N 8 M

Sometime my mother might put up decoration. 14 N 8 M

These nouns which are unmarked for grammatical number should probably be considered more radically non-standard than the regular zero-plural nouns.

Three types of hypercorrection in plural formation were recorded. The first is the addition of the plural morpheme to words which are already marked for plurality.

If you don't like policemen you don't like that show.
6 N 10 M

Some peoples are earlier, you know. 8 N 10 F

Some of 'ems just sits around the house. 11 N 8 F

Fieldworker: What was it about?

Informant: Cars racing and peoples falling off motorcycles.
39 W 1 M

A second type of hypercorrection is the addition of the plural morpheme to words which are not marked for plurality in Standard English:

You jump over the things that goes. It goes 'round and 'round. 36 W 1 F

Fieldworker: How old is he?

Informant: One years old. 29 N 1 M

You can have thirteens trees. 29 N 1 M

A third type of hypercorrection is the "wandering s," or the use of the plural inflection not with the noun but with another word in the sentence:

(Response to word game) Yes, crutch for both sideses. 33 N 1 F

You gets all kinda thing. 38 W 1 M

They sings funny song. 34 N 1 M

Now he fours year old. 29 N 1 M

Word Games

One section of the word-games part of the interview was devoted to the elicitation of plural forms (See Appendix B, Norfolk Dialect Study Questionnaire, Part II, Section I, p. 137).

Of the fourteen items, ten are concerned with -s plurals and four with other types of plural formation. For each lexical item, the informant was asked first if there was any such thing or not, then asked to complete a sentence giving the plural response ("a whole lot of _____"). This section of the word games was completed by all the informants except three first graders.

For the ten s plural nouns, the total of zero plurals for each informant was tabulated. The mean rate of unmarked plurals for each of the four social groups was then computed, and the results are presented in Figure 1 (p. 90). The means for the four groups were found to be 0.5, 3.2, 3.1, and 2.1, respectively. These data reveal that fewer Group I informants use unmarked plurals, and

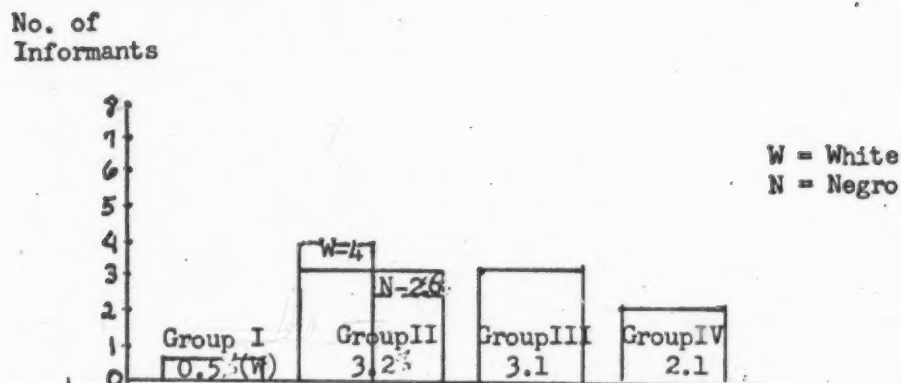


Figure 1.--Mean number of unmarked plurals in response to word games per status group and ethnic group.

that those who do, use them less frequently than informants in the other groups. When the distribution of unmarked plurals is considered from the standpoint of ethnic group, it appears that the mean for white informants is 1.5, as compared to 2.6 for the Negro informants and 2 for the one Chinese informant. The zero plural, then, seems to occur somewhat more frequently in Negro speech than in white speech.

Of the other four plural forms elicited in the word games, two items belonged to classes of nouns which do not form plurals by adding the -s inflection. The first of these items was foot, which in Standard English requires a vowel change but no -s to form the plural, feet. Three non-standard plurals of foot were recorded: foots, foot, and feets; the distribution of these forms is presented in Table 1 (p. 91). None of the Group I informants responded foots, while one (a first-grader) gave the response foot. In Group II, five informants (three white, two Negro) responded foots, as did nine Group III informants; another Group III response was foot.

TABLE 1
NON-STANDARD PLURAL
FORMS OF FOOT

	foots	foot	feets
Group I	0	1	0
Group II	5	0	0
Group III	8	1	0
Group IV	3	2	1

In Group IV, there were three responses of foots, two of foot, and one of the hypercorrect feets. The plural form foots seems to be socially stratified and more frequent among Negro informants than among whites.

The other irregular plural was that of sheep, which belongs to the class of nouns in which the plural is identical to the singular form. The non-standard, hypercorrect form sheeps was the response given by two Group I informants (both first-graders), five informants in Group II (three Negro, two white), and six each in Groups III and IV. The data, presented in Table 2 (p. 92), suggest that the sheeps response occurs slightly more frequently among Negro informants of Groups III and IV than among speakers of either race in Groups I and II.

Another special case of plural formation is dealt with in another item of the word games, which elicits the plural of desk. There are two Standard English plurals for this form, desks /dɛskz/ or dess /dɛs:/. For those speakers who may delete the word-final

TABLE 2
HYPERCORRECT PLURALS
OF SHEEP

Group I	2
Group II	5
Group III	6
Group IV	6

stop consonant /k/ after /s/ (and this included most of the native-born informants in the sample), two plural formations were possible: the lengthening of the /s/ sound, or the use of plural suffix /ɪz/ appropriate after sibilants; thus, /dɛsɪz/, or dessees.⁷ The distribution of the plurals of desk elicited in the word games is presented in Table 3 (below). The response dessees /dɛsɪz/ was given by

TABLE 3
PLURAL FORMATION FOR DESK

	dessees	dess	desk	desks	dests
Group I	1	3	2	3	1
Group II	2	4	4	0	0
Group III	5	3	0	0	1
Group IV	5	3	0	0	1

one Group I informant (the Chinese), two Negroes in Group II, five Negroes in Group III and another five in Group IV. The response

desks /dɛskz/ was given only by three informants, all in Group I. Dess /dɛs:/ was recorded for three whites in Group I, two whites and two Negroes in Group II, three in Group III and another three in Group IV. Desk /dɛsk/ occurred only among Group I and Group II informants (two whites in Group I, three in Group II, and one Negro in Group II). The variant dests /dɛsts/ was given by one informant each in Groups I, III, and IV. The pattern of these responses suggests that desses is a characteristic of non-white speech, especially in the lower-status groups; that desks is one of the more prestigious plural forms; that dess is equally prestigious but more common among speakers of all social groups.

The fourth plural elicited is that of the nonsense-word kas. These responses must be considered standard or non-standard according to whether the informant has said "yes" or "no" to the question, "Is there any such thing as a kas?" Several of the informants who answered in the affirmative volunteered the information that a kas is something you get when you break your arm, a big white plaster thing. It may therefore be assumed that these and other informants who answered "yes" to the question took kas to be a variant pronunciation of cast /kæst/. For these informants the standard response would be kass /kæs:/; the non-standard response would be kasses /kæsi:/ . For the informants who answered that there was no such thing as a kas the standard response would be kasses; a response of kas would indicate a zero plural. The distribution of the various responses to the plural of kas is presented in Table 4 (p. 94). Of the thirty-six informants for whom responses were recorded, twenty gave one of the Standard

TABLE 4
PLURAL FORMATION OF KAS/CASTS

	no, kasses	yes, kass	no, kass	yes, kasses	other
Group I	5	2	1	2	0
Group II	1	4	1	3	0
Group III	1	2	1	5	0
Group IV	0	5	0	0	3

English forms; the kas form of the plural was the preferred standard response. Thirteen informants gave non-standard responses; of these ten were yes/kasses, three were no/kas. There were also three other responses. One of the more interesting sidelights of the results of this word game is that twenty-six of the thirty-six informants perceived kas /kæ s/ as cast /kæ st/.

Social and Ethnic Distribution of Zero Plural

The distribution of the zero plural by social group is described in terms of frequency of occurrence for each informant. All potential -s plurals were counted for each taped interview (excluding word games), except ambiguous cases where the following word began with a sibilant and for nouns which do not occur without a final -s in Standard English (e.g. clothes, scissors, the movies). For words which occurred more than three times, either with or without the -s marker, only the first three instances of either type were counted. The total of -s marked plurals and zero plurals gave the number of

potention -s plurals. The frequency of the unmarked plurals in relation to -s plurals was then computed as the quotient of the zero plurals divided by potention -s plurals.

The mean frequency of zero plurals for each of the four social groups is presented in Figure 2 (below). As illustrated, there is

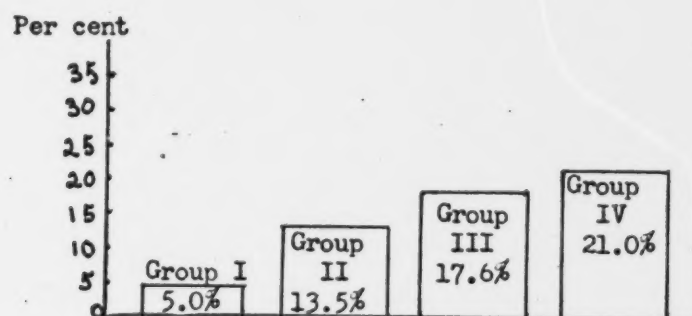


Figure 2.—Mean frequency of unmarked plurals in speech (includes all informants).

a graded difference between the mean frequency rates for each group: Group I, 5.0%, Group II, 13.5%, Group III, 17.6%, and Group IV, 21.0%. To compensate for the fact that each group contained one or more informants whose speech did not manifest the zero plural, the means for informants in whose speech the feature did occur was computed, and the results are presented in Figure 3 (p. 96). Generally, the mean frequency of zero plural tended to increase with decreasing social status, with means of 16.7% in Group I, 19.3% in Group II, 19.6% in Group III, and 23.6% in Group IV.

In terms of ethnic distribution, the zero plural was found to occur in the speech of the bilingual Chinese informant, four of the thirteen white informants (31.8%), and twenty-four of the twenty-six

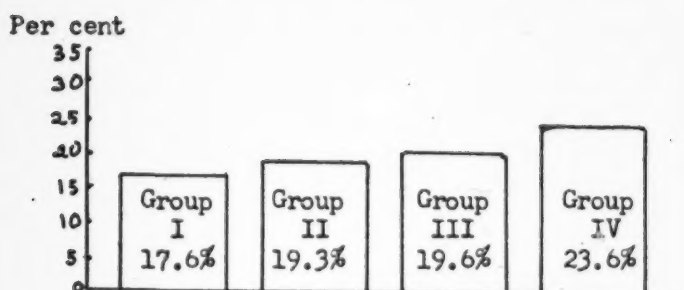


Figure 3.—Mean frequency of unmarked plurals for informants in whose speech the feature occurred.

Negro informants (94.6%). By ethnic group, the mean frequency of unmarked plurals among speakers who use this form is presented in Figure 4 (below). For Negro informants, the mean was 21.9%; for non-Negroes, it was 10.5%. Among the Negro informants of Groups II, III, and IV, there was no appreciable difference.

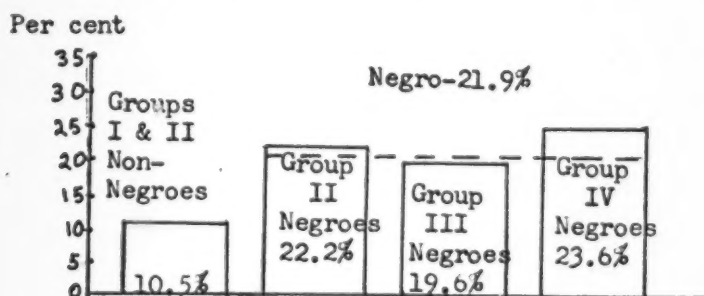


Figure 4.—Mean frequency of unmarked plurals by ethnic group and social status group.

Conclusions

The zero, or unmarked plural, was a frequently recurring feature of non-standard speech in the present corpus, occurring in the speech

of twenty-nine of the forty informants. It was found among white speakers in both Group I and Group II. The feature occurred more frequently in Negro speech than in white speech, but does not seem to be related to social status among the Negroes included in the sample.

CHAPTER X

POSSESSIVE FORMATION

One of the items of non-standard usage that recurred in the Norfolk corpus is the zero possessive, or the use of a noun without the Standard English *-s* (/s/~/z/~/ɪz/) inflection. The juxtaposition of two uninflected nouns corresponds to the Standard English marked possessives.

William Carroll and Irwin Feigenbaum have indicated that simple juxtaposition of nouns indicates the possessive relationship in non-standard dialect, and that "there is no possessive inflection."¹ Similarly, Ralph Fasold and Walt Wolfram observe that "Negro dialect indicates possessive by the order of the words," although most speakers alternate the *'s* form with the unmarked form, especially in Northern cities. They also note that the possessive suffix seems to occur more frequently in clause-final position than in the attributive possessive. Because of the relative instability of the marked possessive in Negro non-standard dialects, hypercorrection sometimes results in the attaching of the suffix to the first name of a proper name, rather than to the surname.² Edmund Anderson, remarking that "the SE possessive for nouns is used but rarely," explains that "a

¹William Carroll and Irwin Feigenbaum, Teaching a Second Dialect and some Implications for TESOL, p. 32.

²Ralph Fasold and Walt Wolfram, "Some Linguistic Features of Negro Dialect," pp. 76-77.

noun without a segmental possessive indicator may nevertheless be possessive . . . due to the stress pattern of the respective phrases. Word order (N + N) and accompanying stress pattern / \ are indicators of possession. (/ = Primary Stress; \ = Secondary Stress."³

Patterns of Unmarked Possessives

In the present corpus the zero possessive was especially common in words that precede the word house. Such words were often terms of kinship.

She took 'em to his house, Heath and his mother and sister house. 20 N 6 M

I like to go over my sister house. 35 N 1 M

I was going to the store over at my sister house on Tidewater Drive. 22 N 6 F

Fieldworker: What do you do when school's over?

Informant: Do a lot o' things, like play tennis, run around, go to my friend house mostly. 23 C 6 F

For a week we all go to my grandma house. 34 N 1 M

Last time we went to ah, down my grandmamma house. 21 N 6 M

It's not here, it's at my grandmamma house. 34 N 1 M

He drove his wife over to that man apartment. 28 N 6 M

New Years Day we went over my grandmother. 20 N 6 M

Among informants who used unmarked possessives, the lexical item people was seldom inflected to show possession.

³Edmund Anderson, A Grammatical Overview of Baltimore Non-standard Negro English, p. A-7.

My sister snatch other people bags Halloween. 33 N 1 F

Fieldworker: What do you all do?

Informant: Build houses and ah make, ah find people addresses. 31 N 1 M

He bump into people car. 30 N 1 F

Fieldworker: What do the kids in your neighborhood do on Halloween?

Informant: Go around taking people bags and stuff. 15 N 8 M

(Same question)

Informant: Throw egg on people face, snatch people bags and stuff. 25 N 6 M

We just went to people houses, rang the bell and got candy. 18 N 6 F

Another word which usually did not take the possessive marker was class.

Most all my friends up in my class. Some in Miss Brock, some in Miss Ramsay, some downstairs. 20 N 6 M

Mostly she's trying to get the class attention for something. 16 N 8 F

Words preceding the lexical item name were also often unmarked for possession.

I don't know the teacher name. 30 N 1 F

I forgot that man name. 21 N 6 M

I forgot the boy name. 20 N 6 M

That wa' the girl name, Katie. 28 N 6 M

Other instances of unmarked possessives did not fall into any recurring categories.

I got a red costume. It got a devil face right on it, right there. 34 N 1 M

They pull a lady hair off. 33 N 1 F

Sherwood mama had to come to school today. 30 N 1 F

The wheel hit him and knocked him in the middle and, and
the wheel hit my other brother dog and kill 'im. 17 N 6 M

She had a daughter 'bout the same age as the other lady
daughter. 7 N 10 F

This judge son kill a lady. 18 N 6 F

I thought it was something on somebody arm. 20 N 6 M

Billy bike and Rejean bike 'bout that little. 35 N 1 M

He took the man gold that he had. 20 N 6 M

Now she ain't in Miss Sergolly class. 30 N 1 F

All the king horses and all the king men
Tried to paste Humpty back together again. 34 N 1 M

Word Games

A five-item word game elicited the possessive form of nouns
(see Appendix, Norfolk Dialect Study Questionnaire, Part II, Section II,
p. 138). The informants were asked to complete the following sen-
tences:

- A. This girl has a bike. It's not the boy bike, it's
the ____.
- B. This dog has a bone. It's not the cat bone, it's the ____.
- C. This mouse has some cheese. It's not the rat cheese,
it's the ____.
- D. Jack Johnson has a car. It's not Paul Brown car, it's ____.
- E. Derek Black has a toy. It's not Paul Brown toy, it's ____.

Thirty-seven of the forty informants participated in this
section of the word games. Non-standard responses to each item were
tabulated, and the summary is presented in Table 1 (p. 102).

TABLE 1
NON-STANDARD RESPONSES TO POSSESSIVE-FORMATION WORD GAMES

	Item A	Item B	Item C	Item D	Item E	Total
Group I	1	4	6	1	0	12
Group II	1	2	4	1	3	11
Group III	2	4	8	4	5	23
Group IV	2	3	9	6	8	28
Total	6	13	27	12	16	74

The Standard English response to Item A is girl's bike; its non-standard equivalent is girl bike. One informant in Group I (a first-grader), one in Group II (a Negro tenth-grader), and two informants in each of Groups III and IV gave the non-standard responses. In all, there were six non-standard responses to Item A. For Item B, there were thirteen non-standard responses of "dog bone," of which four were in Group I, two were in Group II, four were in Group III, and three were in Group IV. There is no remarkable difference among social status groups for either of these two responses, although there does seem to be significant patterning of the non-standard responses to the next three items.

Twenty-seven informants gave the non-standard response to Item C (mouse cheese), with ten of them in Groups I and II and seventeen in Groups III and IV. The high number of non-standard responses to this item might be accounted for by the fact that "rat cheese" is

a commonly used name of a sharp, inexpensive cheddar, and "mouse cheese" is analogous to the commonly acceptable phrase.

Items D and E, which involved the possessive formation with proper names, showed a more clear-cut social patterning of the non-standard responses. The Standard English responses to Item D, which were marked for the possessive, included Jack Johnson's car, Jack's car, Jack Johnson's, Jack's, and his. Similarly, responses to Item E which were considered standard were Derek Black's toy, Derek's toy, Derek Black's, Derek's, and his. If the informant's response was marked for possession but the name was not identical to the one in the cue, the response was considered standard (e.g. John Jackson's car, Jerry Black's toy). Only one Group I informant (a first-grader) gave the zero possessive response to either Item D or E. In Group II, there was one uninflected response for Item D and three for Item E. In Group III, the non-standard responses were four and five, respectively; and for Group IV, six and eight. There seems to be a significant difference in the use of the zero possessive between the upper and lower groups. Hypercorrect forms of Jack's Jones car, Derek's Black, occurred only among Groups II (one Negro), III (two), and IV (two).

The non-standard responses to the first two items of the word games, then, showed no social patterning, and there was only a suggestion of social significance in the distribution of the responses to the third item. For the last two items (possessive form of proper names) there seemed to be a tendency for informants in the two lower-status groups to use the zero possessive more than for those in the

upper status groups. Altogether, more of the Negroes used the zero possessive than whites, although it did occur in the responses of white informants, especially first-graders.

Social and Ethnic Distribution

The zero possessive was found in the speech of eighteen informants, one Chinese and seventeen Negro. In Group I only the bilingual Chinese girl used the unmarked possessive, and only two of the six Negro informants in Group II did so; it occurred in the speech of seven of the ten in Group III and eight of the ten in Group IV. In terms of occurrence or non-occurrence, this feature seems to be socially stratified as well as ethnically distinctive.

In order to determine whether the possessive morpheme was optional or entirely absent in the speech of these informants, the total of possessive nouns was counted and the number of potential marked possessives compared to the total of the unmarked ones. The results of the analysis, which are summarized in Table 2 and Table 3 (p. 105) suggest that the presence or absence of the possessive morpheme is not only socially stratified but age-graded.

The mean frequency of zero possessive was computed as the quotient of the unmarked forms divided by the potential number of marked forms. The mean frequency for the informant who used that feature was computed, then the mean frequency for each group. The results are presented in Table 2 (p. 105). Not only does the number of informants who use uninflected forms decrease with increasing social status, but the frequency of uninflected forms for each group decreases as well.

TABLE 2
DISTRIBUTION OF UNMARKED POSSESSIVE FORMS

	No. of Informants	Indiv. Mean Frequency	Group Mean Frequency
Group I	1	33%	3.3%
Group II	2	68%	12.5%
Group III	7	82%	57.5%
Group IV	8	92%	74.2%

TABLE 3
RELATIVE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE OF
POSSESSIVE MARKER

	Optional	Absent	Total
Grade 10	1	0	1
Grade 8	2	1	3
Grade 6	3	6	9
Grade 1	0	5	5

As Table 2 illustrates, the zero possessive recurred much more frequently in the speech of elementary students than among secondary students. Only one eighth-grader used that feature, and then only optionally. At the other end of the grade-level scale are the first-graders, who used the zero morpheme consistently if they used it at all. For the eighth and sixth-graders, there is a tendency to use the marked forms occasionally, the frequency increasing by grade level.

CHAPTER XI

PRONOUNS

Three distinct types of non-standard pronoun usage were found to occur in the speech of the Norfolk schoolchildren: undifferentiated pronouns, pronominal apposition, and existential it.

Undifferentiated pronouns, according to William Stewart, involve "the use of the same pronoun form for both subject and object, and sometimes for possession as well." Such pronouns may be unmarked not only for case but for number and gender as well.¹ Like Stewart, who found undifferentiated pronouns to be a diagnostic characteristic of non-standard Negro speech in Washington, Beryl Bailey observes that "in the American Negro [dialect] system, the form they serves for the possessive pronoun their," and "the pronoun you does not change in the possessive."² Robert Graves mentions that the occurrence of the form me as one element of a compound subject is a non-standard feature which occurs in the speech of both lower-class whites and lower-class Negroes.³ William Slager notes that the objective form of the pronoun occurs in

¹William A. Stewart, "Continuity and Change in American Negro Dialects," The Florida FL Reporter, VI (Spring, 1968), 14.

²Beryl L. Bailey, "Toward a New Perspective in Negro English Dialectology," pp. 166-67.

³Robert L. Graves, "Language Differences among Upper- and Lower-class Negro and White Eighth Graders in East Central Alabama," p. 3658 A.

subject position only in compound subjects,⁴ and Edmund Anderson observes that pronouns in compound subjects are usually the object form in non-standard Baltimore Negro speech.⁵

Pronominal apposition, also known as the double subject or pleonasm, is defined by Ralph Fasold and Walt Wolfram as "the construction in which a pronoun is used in apposition to the noun subject of the sentence. Usually the nominative form of the pronoun is used." They cite evidence that pronominal apposition was used by all speakers in the Detroit Dialect Study, although the acceptability of the construction seems to depend on "the length of the modifying material which intervenes between the noun and the pronoun," and "the exact restrictions on the acceptable usage of pronominal apposition have yet to be discovered."⁶ With these qualifications, Fasold and Wolfram describe the double subject as a common characteristic of non-standard Negro dialects. Susan Houston, working with underprivileged Negro children in Florida, cites the double subject, or pleonasm, as a non-standard usage that her informants shared with white speakers of non-standard English.⁷

⁴William Slager, "Effecting Dialect Change Through Oral Drill," p. 1175.

⁵Edmund Anderson, A Grammatical Overview of Baltimore Non-standard Negro English, p. 41.

⁶Ralph Fasold and Walt Wolfram, "Some Linguistic Features of Negro Dialect," p. 81.

⁷Susan Houston, "A Sociolinguistic Consideration of the Black English of Children in Northern Florida," Language, XLV (September, 1969), p. 603.

The existential, or expletive, use of it as a clause introducer corresponds to the Standard English use of there, according to Edmund Anderson, who notes that the there or it "does not refer to a previous noun phrase and does not by itself have a semantic referent."⁸ Beryl Bailey cites the use of existential it as a characteristic of the speech of the disadvantaged Negro.⁹ Juanita Williamson, whose study of Negro speech in Memphis was the first to report the existence of this construction,¹⁰ has observed that "the structure is found in the speech of both the high and the low classes in the Southern area."¹¹ Ralph Fasold and Walt Wolfram, however, identify the existential it construction as a "Negro dialect" feature, possibly Southern standard, which "affects the understanding of a considerable number of sentences in ordinary speech."¹²

The undifferentiated pronouns, pronominal apposition, and existential it were all found in the present corpus. Because these non-standard usages fall into distinct linguistic categories and

⁸Edmund Anderson, A Grammatical Overview of Baltimore Non-standard Negro English, p. 24.

⁹Beryl Bailey, "Some Aspects of the Impact of Linguistics on Language Teaching in Disadvantaged Communities," Elementary English XLV (May, 1968), 576.

¹⁰Juanita Williamson, The Speech of Negro High School Students in Memphis, Tennessee, p. 54.

¹¹Juanita Williamson, "A Note on It Is/ There Is." Word Study, XLV (October, 1969), p. 6. Williamson also mentions that, according to the OED, it is is "a usage that may be found as early as 1300 in Cursor Mundi."

¹²Ralph Fasold and Walt Wolfram, "Some Linguistic Features of Negro Dialect," pp. 81-82.

seem to have different social distribution, each type will be discussed separately.

Undifferentiated Pronouns

Several types of undifferentiated pronouns mentioned in previous studies were found in the speech of the Norfolk informants.

The non-standard pronoun usage which recurred most frequently is the use of the subject, or nominative, form of the pronoun where Standard English requires the possessive. Most of the examples involved the use of he for his, although there were a few instances of she for her.

She hair grows. 30 N 1 F

He told him not to mess with he wife no more. 28 N 6 M

My cousin got he nose broke playing football, so I don't play football much. 12 N 8 M

All of a sudden he just got all of he books and everything and throwed 'em in the wastebasket. 2 N 10 M

My brother Bernard, it was he birthday. 29 N 1 M

He wouldn't even talk to he mama today. 30 N 1 F

Sometimes he bring he toys to school and we play with 'em. 34 N 1 M

So then this boy ran away, you know, to he mother. 20 N 6 M

There were slightly fewer examples of the use of they corresponding to Standard English their, although this feature occurred in the speech of more informants than the non-standard singular possessive form.

Whoever makes it, they choose they team. 12 N 8 M

They store they food for dinner. 16 N 8 F

My cousin came over my home and they friends...and they friends came over there and they played some records and stuff. 15 N 8 M

They don't have nothing on they head. They go to school with nothing on they head. 30 N 1 M

They say they would like me to play with them and hang up they coat coat sweater. 33 N 1 F

Most o' they men got killed. 20 N 6 M

They tell about people and they great...and they history. 18 N 6 F

In Chinese they have meaning to they name. 23 C 6 F

Unmarked possessive pronouns occurred in the speech of fourteen informants, most of them Group III and Group IV Negroes. Three informants in Groups III and IV used unmarked forms in both the singular and the plural. Of the ten informants who used the they possessive, one was the Chinese informant in Group I, three were Group III Negroes, and four were in Group IV. The singular possessive forms he and she occurred in the speech of one Group II Negro, four in Group III, and two in Group IV.

Non-standard usage of the first-person singular possessive forms was relatively infrequent.

(Singing "Down in the Valley")

Will you be my, dear,

Will you be my,

Answer my question,

Will you be my. 37 N 1 F

I did mines good. 35 N 1 M

Fieldworker: Do you have a pet?

Informant: No. My brother does, a fish. My and my sister's died. Mine had white on the end of mine tail. 38 W 1 M

All of the informants who used non-standard singular possessive pronouns were first-graders. Unmarked second person possessive pronouns did not

occur. The second person plural pronoun you all did not occur in the speech of any of the forty informants.

Five informants used masculine pronouns with antecedents that require feminine gender in Standard English. Most of the examples involve animals.

One day this summer, we went to beach, and these mean children out throwing him up the sliding board—he wasn' but a kitten—throwing 'im up the sliding board and letting him fall on the ground, so my big brother he went out and got the cat and said they had no business doing that, so we...my big brother bathed him out in a bath. He bought 'im a bowl, a bath tub, and bathed him up out in the back yard and gave him some milk, and ah after he gave her milk my mother name her Fluffy. So she kept her until he got real big, and when he got real smart, and he attack people. (stutters) So ah he got big, he gon' have some babies—she was gon' have some babies, and so she went away, and we ain't seen her since. 20 N 6 M

We call him Gypsy Woman, 'cause he's Gypsy, and he's named Gypsy, and he's a girl. 39 W 1 M

My dog and this 'nother dog named Tippy, he came over and they started kissing. Tippy is a girl. 39 W 1 M

His name Lady. 33 N 1 F

Fieldworker: What does a nurse do?

Informant: He helps people. 40 W 1 F

Is he a lady or not? 34 N 1 M

Everybody thought he kill him. (several sentences later)
And he say, "didn't you kill her?" 20 N 6 M

Four of these five informants were first-graders, two whites and two Negroes. The other was a sixth-grade Negro informant.

The use of object-form pronouns in subjects was also noted. All of these occurred in compound subjects, usually with a noun. There were more examples of the subject use of me than the only other non-standard pronoun form, him. The use of them as a subject did not occur; her occurred only once.

Bernadine and me twin. 30 N 1 F

Me and my sister and brother, we went trick or treat. 29 N 1 M

Me and Mark was playing. 38 W 1 M

Me and my sister pretend I'm the first lady or she's the second lady. 37 N 1 F

We got a room, me and all o' us there. 35 N 1 M

In the summer most of the time me and people in my neighborhood, we build clubhouses and things. 17 N 6 M

Me and her had to go to the store 'bout eight o'clock. 18 N 6 F

Usually just me and my dad and one of his friends goes. 27 W 6 M

Me and my cousins, we went looking for ice to slide on and I found some and it held me up until I got out deeper and slipped. 27 W 6 M

Me and the other guy have a big fight and stuff and then when they get ready to do something I tell 'em not to do it. 15 N 8 M

He broke out of jail, him and another man. 8 N 10 F

Me and him got the same bike. 35 N 1 M

The use of me or him where Standard English calls for I or he occurred in the speech of twelve informants: two in Group I, four in Group II, and three in each of the other groups. While this feature does not seem to be socially stratified, it does seem to occur somewhat more frequently in the speech of Negroes than of whites; 34% of the former and 13% of the latter ethnic groups used these forms.

Related to the non-standard use of possessive and object forms of personal pronouns is the use of these forms in combination with self, that is, in the intensive and reflexive forms. The self suffix is attached to the object form of the personal pronoun in Standard English, but some informants used it with the subject forms.

He get it heself, later on. 30 N 1 F

I caught ants, put 'em in jars, did different 'speriments with 'em, and ah see how they live, see what kind o' things and ah how they just took care of theyself. 16 N 8 F

Others used the possessive forms with self.

He teach his self. 30 N 1 F

Then he made his self into a great person. 10 N 10 M

He throw his self, he go "Wooooooo!" 35 N 1 M

A few informants used own with the reflexive forms.

He get he own self in trouble. 30 N 1 F

Well, I was on the Booker T. basketball team but I cut my own self off. 14 N 8 M

Of the five informants who used non-standard intensive-reflexive forms, all were Negroes, one in Group II, two in Group III, and another two in Group IV.

Similarly, some informants used the personal pronoun me where Standard English usage requires the reflexive form myself.

I had me a good time. 12 N 8 M

I'd buy my mumma a house, and then I'd buy me, buy me ah two cars, one for my mumma, one for my...one for me. 15 N 8 M

I'd keep some to buy me a house and clothes. 18 N 6 F

I'd buy me a boat. 19 W 6 M

I buy me a home, and then ah ah I buy me a car and save some of it. 22 N 6 F

I would buy me a dog. 36 W 1 F

None of these informants used the non-standard intensive-reflexives. Among the eight informants who used me as a reflexive, there seems to be no clear-cut social or ethnic demarcation. The feature occurred

in the speech of one informant in Group I, three in Group II, one in Group III, and three in Group IV. About the same proportion of these informants were white (23%) as Negro (20%).

Yet another use of undifferentiated pronouns is the use of object form of the third person plural personal pronoun them as a demonstrative, corresponding to the Standard English usage of those.

My friend Herbert he got a costume design like a ghost costume with them sharp teefies and a big eye right there. 31 N 1 M

You know them big bikes don't have no training wheel on 'em? 35 N 1 M

I don't know them other kind of games. 33 N 1 F

I don't like them shows that...them comedy shows. 21 N 6 M

This usage occurred only in the speech of Negroes, one in Group II, four in Group III, and one in Group IV. Of the six informants who used them as a demonstrative pronoun, four were first-graders.

Existential it

A number of informants used it to introduce a sentence in the same context as the more usual expletive there.

He tore me once there, once there, and it was blood coming out too. 21 N 6 M

One night he say, "It's a snake in the bed! It's a snake in the bed!" 34 N 1 M

They told the teacher it was a pin in her chair and when she sat down it wasn't one in there. 22 N 6 F

It was this boy that his mother went to this town and left two little children. 20 N 6 M

It was a bale o' movies I saw 'at were kinda good. 15 N 8 M

Fieldworker: What was the movie about?

Informant: It had a little bit o' blood in it, and had a little bit o' messy murder. It's this guy that took a screwdriver and stuck a guy's hand right in the ground.
32 W 1 M

It's three of 'em. 16 N 8 F

Only a few examples of existential it might be confused with the personal pronoun it and thus be ambiguous in meaning.

It was a friend with me. 39 W 1 M

It wa' raining and thunder. 21 N 6 M

It's pretty much I learn. 37 N 1 F

Well, it's not a place with a lot o' cars, it's usually horses going down the street most of all. 27 W 6 M

My mama says it's not true it's a ghost. 33 N 1 F

Altogether twelve informants used it as an expletive. The feature occurred in the speech of slightly more Negroes than whites, with nine, or 34 per cent, of the Negroes using the form, and three, or 23 per cent, of the whites. The distribution of the feature by social status group showed no meaningful stratification, with two informants in Groups I and III using it, as well as four informants in Groups II and IV.

Pronominal Apposition

The use of a pronoun in apposition to a noun subject occurred in the speech of an overwhelming majority of the informants. Most of these pronouns occur immediately after the noun.

To Sir with Love, that wa' pretty good. 2 N 10 M

Volleyball, that's the only thing we play for physical education. 21 N 6 M

Reginald, he can beat anybody in my team playing. 20 N 6 M

Then her sons, they came in there. 18 N 6 F

You see, the Mod Squad, they're three people. 17 N 6 M

My mother and father, they're from Canton, China, both of 'em. 23 C 6 F

My brother, he studies about it a lot, and I learn a lot from him. 24 W 6 M

Well, my mother, she goes up to visit her sister. 26 N 6 F

See, my brother, he stay up in New York. 28 N 6 M

My little brother and sister, they were kinda happy 'cause Christmas was coming. 15 N 8 M

My great-grandmother, she used to raise Great Danes. 9 W 10 M

This Rod Serling, he writes a story about each one. 3 W 10 M

He thought that the students, they were mostly acting childish in class. 2 N 10 M

Really, ah, all o' the girls, they pitch in. 16 N 8 F

My mother, she sent me to New York. My uncle, he sent me... he sent me back. 11 N 8 F

Well, on Christmas my mother and my sister and I, we all go to my grandmother's. 5 W 10 F

In other cases there are phrases that intervene between the noun and the pronoun.

A boy name Roy Stevens, he play football all the time.

That boy name Steven Gregory, he goes out with me. 21 N 6 M

Most of the workers that fly, they go find food. 16 N 8 F

First thing, I wouldn't want to be a teacher because a teacher really have to keep his cool sometime 'cause some guys, you know, they really get out of hand. 6 N 10 M

The next person who gets to the place where we 'posed to be going, they get to be the mother. 8 N 10 F

Whoever makes it, they choose they team. 12 N 8 M

In the summer most of the time me and people in my neighborhood, just the children my age, we build little clubhouses and things. 17 N 6 M

The person that's next to him, he go to the room and start telling about article he read. 18 N 6 F

Master Jack, his name was Master Jack, he stand up in the chair. 20 N 6 M

California, I think it's gonna sink. 24 W 6 M

One o' my friends in our classroom, he went to Washington and I saw him. 39 W 1 M

Although the double subject may not be considered non-standard when intervening phrases occur between the noun subject and a pronoun subject in apposition to it, all of the informants who used this type of pronominal apposition also used the simpler type with the pronoun immediately after the noun.

Thirty of the forty informants used the double subject construction, with about the same distribution by social status group: eight in Group I, seven in Group II, eight in Group III, seven in Group IV. About the same proportion of white informants as Negroes used pronominal apposition in their speech.

Conclusions

The various non-standard pronoun usages seem to be subject to varying degrees of social and ethnic stratification. The unmarked possessive forms did not occur in the speech of white informants; they occur most frequently in the speech of Negroes in the two lower-status groups. Problems with first-person possessive forms were limited to

first-graders, as were most of the non-standard gender distinctions. Object forms occurring in compound subjects, however, did not seem to vary by the social status of the informant, and seemed to be subject to only slight ethnic difference. The use of the form me instead of the standard reflexive form was equally distributed among the informants of the four status groups and the two races, although the non-standard equivalents of the reflexive-intensive forms occurred only in Negro speech, especially Groups III and IV. The use of them as a demonstrative was also limited to Negro speech, particularly that of first-graders. The uses of existential it and pronominal apposition are limited neither by ethnic nor status-group distinctions.

CHAPTER XII

QUESTIONS

For some informants in the Norfolk study, word order in direct and indirect questions does not follow the patterns of Standard English. As Ralph Fasold and Walt Wolfram explain,

the form which questions take in standard English depends on whether the question is direct or indirect. If the question is direct, word-order inversion takes place, but if the question is indirect, the basic word order is retained. . . . In Negro dialect spoken in the North, the inverted form of the question is used for both direct and indirect questions and the words if and whether are not used to form indirect yes-no questions.¹

Similarly, Joan Baratz' contrastive study of urban Negro and suburban white speech in the Washington area suggests that the use of if with uninverted word order in indirect questions does not occur in non-standard Negro dialect, and that this feature is one of the most significant distinctions between the two sets of informants.² Susan Houston's Florida study indicates that "Black English in so-called Wh- questions does not invert word order or add a do transformation before forming the question," and Houston lists this feature among the major syntactic differences between Child Black English and standard non-black English.³

¹Ralph Fasold and Walt Wolfram, "Some Linguistic Features of Negro Dialect," p. 79.

²Joan C. Baratz, A Bi-Dialectal Test for Determining Language Proficiency, ERIC Document ED 020 519 (June, 1968), pp. 5-13.

³Susan Houston, "A Sociolinguistic Consideration of the Black English of Children in Northern Florida," p. 603.

In the present study, non-standard word order was observed in both direct and indirect questions.

Direct Questions

Direct questions, either standard or non-standard, occurred relatively infrequently in the present corpus. A number of the informants, however, used question constructions which do not have the form do, which carries the tense marker and precedes the subject in Standard English questions.

How many he had? 29 N 1 M

Where you live? 29 N 1 M

(changing the subject) Stephen had a sucker? 30 N 1 F

What you say the first name was? 35 N 1 M

What you say? 7 N 10 F, 17 N 6 M

I help her wash the dishes, and I say, "Mumma, why I have to wash the dishes all the time?" 33 N 1 F

Several informants "translated" a question from the fieldworker from the standard construction and repeated it without the form do (did).

Fieldworker: Then what did you do?

Informant: What I do? I don't do nothing but sit there in the classroom and laugh. 13 N 3 M

Fieldworker: How did you dress up this Halloween?

Informant: How I dress up? 31 N 1 M

Non-standard direct questions occurred in the speech of eight informants, all of them Negroes. Five of the eight were first-graders, with one in sixth, eighth, and tenth grades, respectively. Only one informant was in Group II, although there were five in Group III and two in Group IV.

Indirect Questions

Non-standard indirect questions occurred somewhat more frequently than direct questions in the corpus, although indirect questions of any kind were relatively scarce. Most of the non-standard indirect questions collected from the narratives occurred after the word ask.

His own wife ask him could he tell her the person. 6 N 10 M

She went to ask this white lady could she work in her house. 7 N 10 F

Someone gets up front and you ask 'em how many giant steps, how many little steps can you take. 8 N 10 F

I ask my big brother was he going to let him do it, uh, and my big brother say, "I don't care." 17 N 6 M

Heath ask the little boy how long his mother been gone. 20 N 6 M

Sometimes I ax...ask my mumma can I go outside, and my mumma say no when it's too cold. 33 N 1 F

I ask my aunt can he ride one o' my horses. 34 N 1 M

Other indirect questions with inverted word order occurred after similar words, such as see, find out, and tell (which seems to be somewhat different in meaning in non-standard Negro speech and the standard dialects).

He went to tell 'em can he, can he save the park for the children. 34 N 1 M

This man decided to see was it gold. 20 N 6 M

They tried to find out who was the gangs and the contacts. 16 N 8 F

I do my work, I tell my mama can I go outdoors, she say yeah, and then I come back in before it's get dark. 29 N 1 M

My grandmama say she was gonna get me ano'...see could she find me ano' puppy. 34 N 1 M

Inverted word order in indirect questions occurred in the speech of ten informants, all of them Negro, including three in Group II, three in Group III, and four in Group IV.

Other Non-standard Questions

Hypercorrection in question constructions occurred in the speech of a few informants.

What is that is? 31 N 1 M

Yes, I know what's color it is. 31 N 1 M

He say, "I think I go and ask 'em, see can we can." 34 N 1 M

Whatever is your shot, if you be in that ring you can hit a marble out. 20 N 6 M

These were all Negro informants at elementary-grade level.

In some question constructions, the zero copula occurred.⁴

Word Games

One section of the word games used in the interviews included cues to elicit indirect questions (See Appendix B, Norfolk Dialect Study Questionnaire, Part II, Section IV, p.139). Thirty-three of the forty informants responded to this section of the word games (the exceptions were first-graders). The informants were given two sentences and instructed to put them together to make one new sentence.

Two of the cues involved indirect questions after ask:

⁴See Chapter II: Zero Copula, p. 22.

C. John asked me this. Did the mail come yet?

G. John asked him this. Where did they go?

The regular, or Standard English, response to these cues are John asked me if the mail had come yet and John asked me where they went, respectively. Only two of the informants gave both of these responses; the exceptions were two Group I tenth-grade informants, one native, one non-native. Group I informants, however, seemed to prefer the if construction with the yes-no question (Item C) but the inverted word order construction with the Wh- question (Item G). One informant in Group II and one in Group IV used the (presumably) standard responses to Item G; all the others (except the two Group I informants already noted) used the inverted word order. The responses to the items eliciting indirect questions after ask are presented in Figures 1 and 2 (below and p. 124).

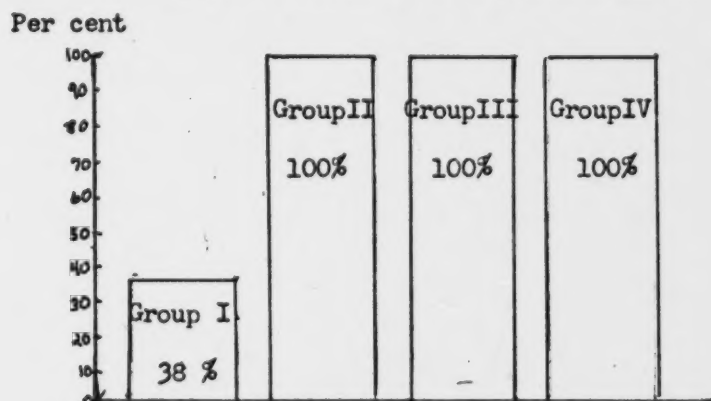


Figure 1.--Inverted word order in responses to Item C: indirect if question after ask.

Two other items elicited indirect questions after other words:

E. John wonders this. Is there water on the moon?

F. John wants to know this. Can the boys come over?

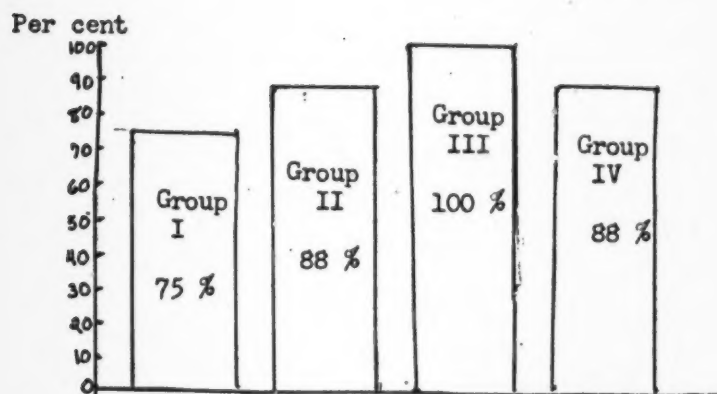


Figure 2.--Inverted word order in responses to Item G: indirect wh question after ask.

The distribution of the responses with inverted word order, which is presented in Figures 3 and 4 (below and p. 126) suggest a less widespread use of inverted indirect questions after words other than ask. Only one Group I informant used the inverted form in either response, but the majority, or 75%, of the informants in Group II, and 80% of Group III, and 75% in Group IV gave such responses to Item E. For

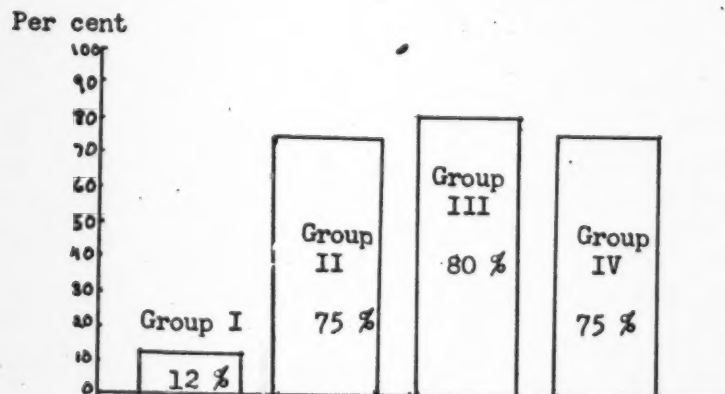


Figure 3.--Inverted word order in responses to Item E: indirect if question after wonders.

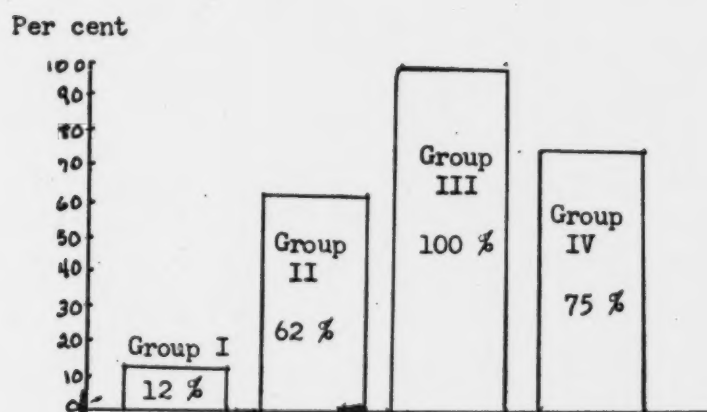


Figure 4.--Inverted word order in responses to Item F: indirect if question after wants to know.

Item F, 40% of the Group II informants, all of these in Group III, and 75% of Group IV gave responses with inverted word order.

In terms of ethnic distribution of inverted word order in responses to the four items, it was found that all of the Negro informants and 85% of the non-Negro informants used inverted word order in one or both of the ask items. The Group I Chinese informant and five of the ten white informants, or 50%, used the inverted forms for Item C, whereas all of the Negro informants in Groups II, III, and IV did so. For Item G, inversion marked the responses of nine of the eleven non-Negro informants, or 82%, in Groups I and II, and seventeen of the nineteen Negroes, or 89%, the exceptions being one tenth-grader in Group II and a sixth-grader in Group IV. There was little difference, then, between ethnic groups for the responses after ask.

The responses to Items E and F were distributed somewhat differently by ethnic group (see Figure 5, p.126). Only three of the eleven, or 27%, of the white informants used inverted word order after

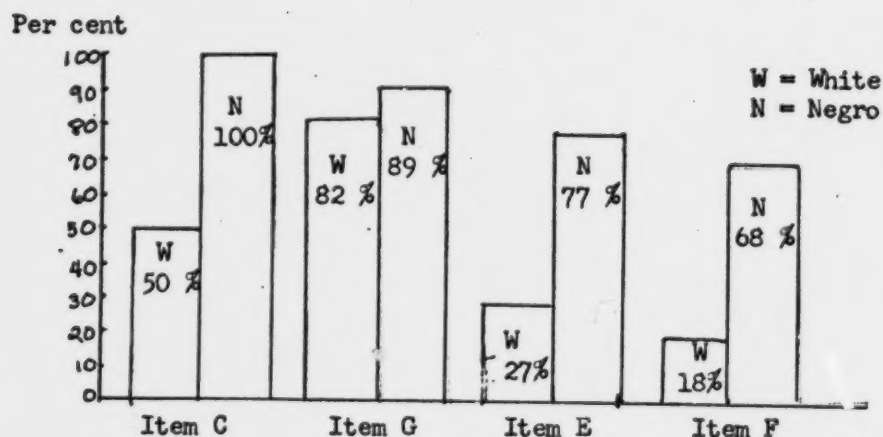


Figure 5.—Ethnic distribution of inverted word order in indirect questions in word games.

Item E, as opposed to fourteen of the eighteen Negroes (77%); there was no meaningful difference among the Negroes of the respective status groups. For the responses to Item F, only 18% of the white informants and the one Chinese informant gave the inverted response, although fifteen of the twenty-two Negroes (68%) did so; with no appreciable difference among groups.

For fifteen of the thirty-two informants, inverted word order occurred in all four of the word-game responses. For another fifteen, inverted word order and regular word order alternated in their responses. (In the case of the two other informants, not all four of these responses were clearly audible on the tapes.)

Conclusions

Non-standard direct questions seem to be racially identifiable and age-graded, as do hypercorrect question constructions; both of these forms occur most frequently in the speech of Negro first-graders

at the two lowest social levels.

Inverted word order in indirect questions seems, on the basis of the distributions of examples collected from the narratives, to be associated only with Negro speech, with no stratification of this feature among the social-status groups represented in the sample. Because indirect questions occurred rather infrequently in the narrative section of the interviews, however, the responses to the word games may be a more accurate measure of the distribution of inverted word order in such constructions. Word-game responses strongly suggest that inversion after ask is so widespread that it may represent standard regional usage, although inversion after other lexical items seems to occur more frequently in the speech of Negroes than that of whites. The distribution of this feature in the word games as well as the narrative suggests that the relative frequency among the status groups seems to be insignificant.

CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUSIONS

The present study has described patterns of non-standard English which occur among Norfolk school children of various social backgrounds, and it has suggested the general social and ethnic distribution of non-standard usages. The findings suggest several linguistic and pedagogical conclusions.

Regional versus Ethnic Variation

There were various patterns of social and ethnic distribution of the non-standard usages found among the forty informants in the Norfolk study. These patterns shed considerable light on the question of "Black English," a hypothetical non-standard dialect peculiar to Negroes of the lower socio-economic classes.

There were indeed a number of features of non-standard English that were found exclusively in the speech of Negro informants in the present study. These features are the deletion of past-tense forms of the copula, use of A-temporal finite be, ain't, wa' (or were) for was, unmarked verbs in the third person singular present tense, past-tense forms for past participles and vice versa, unmarked possessive nouns and pronouns, demonstrative them, and non-standard formation of intensive-reflexive pronouns.

Other features of non-standard usage were found to occur more frequently in the speech of Negro informants than in the speech of non-Negroes. Such features include the deletion of present-tense forms of the copula, multiple negative constructions, object-form pronouns in compound subjects, deletion of the auxiliaries will and would, unmarked plurals, and inverted word order in indirect questions after words other than ask.

Still other features of non-standard English occurred with the same frequency in the speech of Negroes as in the speech of the other informants. Such features were the use of be without the auxiliary will or would, the use of been without the auxiliary have, was after a compound or plural subject, unmarked past-tense forms, personal pronoun forms as reflexives, pronominal apposition, existential it, and inverted word order in indirect questions after ask.

One non-standard feature occurred in non-Negro speech but not in Negro speech; that was the existential there was followed by a plural subject.

Almost all¹ of the features of non-standard English found in the present corpus have been described in other studies as characteristic features of non-standard Negro speech. The Norfolk data, however, strongly indicate that most of these features (which are considered "Black English" in Northern cities) occur in Norfolk in the speech of whites as well as Negroes. It might, therefore, be preferable to consider these features as characteristics of non-standard regional

¹There are two exceptions: demonstrative them and wa/'were for was apparently have not been discussed in previous studies of non-standard usage.

speech rather than that of a particular ethnic group.

An hypothesis of a characteristic "dialect" among the Negro informants does not seem to be supported by the data collected in Norfolk. While there do appear to be some non-standard usages which were used exclusively by Negro informants, and others which occurred more frequently in Negro speech than in white speech, the similarities between non-standard speech of Negro and white informants far outweigh the differences. In fact, with the exception of a few first-graders, the Negro informants whose speech manifested non-standard features generally did not use the non-standard forms all the time; rather, the standard and non-standard forms co-occurred in the speech of the great majority of these informants. Although there seems to be ethnic variation in non-standard usage, a separate and distinct Negro "dialect" does not seem to exist in the Norfolk speech community represented in the present study.

Variation by Age and Social Status

As might have been expected, some non-standard usages appear to be patterned by the age of the informants, others by social status.

In general, the younger informants tended to use more non-standard speech features, and to use them more frequently, than the older informants. Hypercorrection was more common among first-graders than among the older groups. The same was true of the use of ain't, contracted past-tense forms was and were, demonstrative them, and regular word order in direct questions. The loss of auxiliary will or would occurred among white informants

only at the first-grade level. Informants in the first and sixth grades were responsible for most of the examples of non-standard usage involving grammatical gender of pronouns, first-person singular personal pronoun forms, the use of past participial forms as past-tense verbs, and the use of past-tense forms as past participles.

As a rule, the higher the social status of the informant, the fewer features of non-standard English were found in his speech, and the less frequently they occurred. Unmarked plurals and the use of was with a compound or plural subject (both of which occurred in the speech of informants of both major ethnic groups and all four status groups) seem to be socially stratified. Several features which occurred only in the speech of Negro informants also seem to be socially stratified; these include the unmarked possessive form of nouns, A-temporal finite be, wa'/'were and its negative form won't.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further fieldwork in Norfolk speech is recommended for several reasons. First of all, there is at present no full or current definition of the standard regional dialect.² Some speech features stigmatized in the North recurred throughout the social spectrum of the Norfolk sample, suggesting that some attention should now be given to defining and de-

²There is, of course, Hans Kurath and Raven McDavid's Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada, which included three Norfolk informants a generation ago and which contains useful generalizations about speech in the broad geographical area that includes Norfolk. The Atlas materials, however, concentrated on features of pronunciations with little attention to morphology and syntax.

scribing the standard varieties of speech among educated people in the Norfolk area. Older people as well as school children could profitably be included in future field studies. Secondly, a study of attitudes about non-standard usage might be undertaken to provide information on the hierarchy of social stigmatization of these features. Thirdly, groups not represented in the present study might be included in a supplementary study, drawing on Negro middle-class and white lower-class informants whose speech could be compared to the groups which have already been studied. Fourthly, the language of bilingual children in the area might be studied and compared to standard and non-standard speech. Finally, a follow-up to the present study to be undertaken several years from now would, if feasible, compare the present speech of the elementary-level informants with their speech after several years of education and language experience have intervened.

Further studies in Norfolk speech could contribute to the language profile that has been undertaken in the present study.

Pedagogical Considerations

As the foregoing chapters have indicated, features of non-standard English are as much a rule-governed and highly ordered language system as their standard counterparts. Non-standard usage is also systematic in terms of its contrast to Standard English. The present study, which is a description of non-standard English among children in the Norfolk City Schools, was designed to serve as a basis for the ordering of priorities and as a checklist of usages for which attention in the classroom seems to be indicated.

APPENDIX A

DATA COLLECTION FORMS

Dear Parent:

As you probably know, your child _____ recently took part in a tape-recorded interview for the Norfolk ESA Dialects Project. This project, which is sponsored by a federal grant to the Norfolk City Schools, is aimed at improving the methods of teaching reading, writing, and the other language skills.

It would be very helpful to us to have some information about the child's personal background. Will you please complete the questionnaire and return it in a sealed envelope? Please fill in as many blanks as you can; all of this information has some bearing on your child's language performance.

All information that you give us will be used ONLY for the purposes of the language study. It will be held in the strictest confidence.

Thank you for your help in the project.

Sincerely yours,

L. A. DeVere
ESA Dialects Project,
Norfolk City Schools

PERSONAL DATA—NORFOLK DIALECT STUDY

NAME _____ SEX _____ RACE _____
ADDRESS _____
DATE OF BIRTH _____ PLACE OF BIRTH _____
NATIONALITY _____ RELIGION _____
YEARS IN NORFOLK _____ OWN HOME OR RENT? _____
OTHER PLACES LIVED (OUTSIDE NORFOLK) _____
OLDEST CHILD IN FAMILY? _____ IF NOT OLDEST, WHAT? _____
IS ENGLISH SPOKEN IN THE HOME? _____ IF NOT, WHAT? _____
MARITAL STATUS OF PARENTS (MARRIED, DIVORCED, SEPARATED) _____
FATHER'S OCCUPATION _____
FATHER'S BIRTHPLACE _____
FATHER'S EDUCATION: HIGHEST LEVEL COMPLETED GRADE LEVEL (1-12) _____
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE _____ SOME COLLEGE _____ COLLEGE GRADUATE _____
OTHER _____
BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER'S PARENTS: FATHER _____
MOTHER _____
MOTHER'S OCCUPATION _____
MOTHER'S BIRTHPLACE _____
MOTHER'S EDUCATION: HIGHEST LEVEL COMPLETED GRADE LEVEL (1-12) _____
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE _____ SOME COLLEGE _____ COLLEGE GRADUATE _____
OTHER _____
BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER'S PARENTS: FATHER _____
MOTHER _____

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED.
ALL INFORMATION WILL BE USED ONLY FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE ESA SOCIAL
DIALECTS STUDY: IT WILL BE HELD IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE.

APPENDIX B

NORFOLK DIALECT STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

Part I: Elicitation of Narrative

I. School

- A. Is this your first year at _____?
Tell me about your school. What subjects do you take?
What do you do when school is out?
- B. Did you ever have a teacher who hollered a lot? What about? Did you ever get yelled at? What about? Was it fair?
- C. Did you ever have a teacher you just couldn't stand? What didn't you like about her? Did the kids in your class ever play a trick on the teacher?

II. Games and Leisure

- A. (Elementary) What kind of games do you play around here?
(Secondary) What kind of games did you play when you were a kid?

(Perhaps marbles, Red Rover, kick-the-can, May I?, Simon Says, King of the Mountain, Hide-and-seek, Old Witch, hopscotch, jump rope.)

How do you play _____?
How many players?
How do you decide who gets first go?
How do you decide who is It?
- B. What are your favorite TV programs? Tell me about one of the shows you liked a lot.

Have you seen any good movies recently? Tell me about one.
- C. Do you have a pet? What's its name? What does it look like?

III. Group Structure

- A. (Elementary) Is there a group of people you always do things with?
(Secondary) " " " " " " " " " " "
How about when you were in grade-school?
- B. In your group, is there any one person that everybody listens to (regards as the leader)?

Can (could) new kids get into the group? What did they have to do?

C. Do any of the people in the group speak any foreign languages?

D. Are there any white (black) people in the group?

IV. Aspirations

A. What do you want to be when you finish school?
(What did you want to be when you were younger?)

How long does it take to become a _____?

What does a _____ do?

Does a _____ make a lot of money?

If you had all the money you wanted, what would you do with it?

B. Do you help out around the house?

(Secondary only) Do you have a job after school?

Where do you work?

Tell me what you do on a regular day on the job. .

V. Special Occasions

A. How does your family celebrate the holidays? (especially Christmas)

B. What do the kids in your neighborhood do on Halloween?

VI. Fate

A. Were you ever in a situation where you thought you might be killed or might die?

B. Some people say that whatever is going to happen is going to happen. What do you say about that?

Part II: Word Games

Now we're going to play some games with words.

I. Plural

First we're going to see if you can tell if some words are real English words or not. I'm going to use a word in a sentence, and then you tell me if there's any such thing or not.

For example, "This morning I saw a tree. Is there any such thing as a tree?" (After subject answers, say) "Later I saw a whole bunch of them; they are ____." (Induce the person to give the missing word. Either "trees" or "tree" is acceptable.)

- A. This morning I ate a plum. Is there any such thing as a plum?
Tonight I'm going to eat a whole bunch of ____.
- B. I just bought a dress. Is there any such thing as a dress?
If I bought several, I'd have a lot of ____.
- C. The book is about a lun. Is there any such thing as a lun?
If the lun in the book had a big family, there'd be a bunch of ____.
- D. Once I found a stick. Is there any such thing as a stick?
If I found a lot of them, I'd have a bunch of ____.
- E. I had a dream about a kas. Is there any such thing as a kas?
If I dreamed about a bunch of them, they'd be ____.
- F. I wanted to buy a dish. Is there any such thing as a dish?
If I bought several of them, I'd have a bunch of ____.
- G. I had to use a crutch. Is there any such thing as a crutch?
If I had two of them, I'd have a pair of ____.
- H. I used to have a niz. Is there any such thing as a niz?
If I'd had several, I would have had a lot of ____.
- I. The poem is about a sheep. Is there such a thing as a sheep?
If the poem was about a lot of them, it would be about ____.
- J. I thought it was a can. Is there any such thing as a can?
If I saw a lot of them, I'd see a bunch of ____.
- K. It looks like a gutch. Is there any such thing as a gutch?
If it looked like a lot of them, they'd be a bunch of ____.
- L. I wish I had a desk. Is there any such thing as a desk?
If I got a lot of them, I'd have a bunch of ____.
- M. The song is about a wug. Is there any such thing as a wug?
Another song is about a lot of them; it's about ____.
- N. Once I broke my foot. Is there any such thing as a foot?
Then I broke the other one, and I had two broken ____.

II. Possessive

Now we're going to ask you to finish some sentences in a different kind of word game.

Examples: This man has a hat. It's not the woman hat, it's the _____.
The girl has a coat. It's not the boy coat, it's the _____.

(NOTE: It is very important for the interviewer to say "woman hat" and not "woman's hat." The same is true for all questions in this test. If an informant corrects you, you may begin saying "woman's hat" etc.)

- A. This girl has a bike. It's not the boy bike, it's the _____.
- B. This dog has a bone. It's not the cat bone, it's the _____.
- C. This mouse has some cheese. It's not the rat cheese, it's the _____.
- D. Jack Johnson has a car. It's not Paul Brown car, it's _____.
- E. Derrick Black has a toy. It's not Paul Brown toy, it's _____.

III. Auxiliary probe

This time we're going to do one that's a little more complicated. First I'll give you a sentence and you'll answer it.

For example, I say, "He can drive a motorcycle." You say, "I know he can."
Then I ask, "Can what?" and you answer "Drive a motorcycle."

The teacher could be wrong.
Could what?

I know she could.
Be wrong.

Darryl hit his brother.
Did what?

I know he did.
Hit his brother.

Them boys over there, they can
beat up anybody.
Can what?

I know they can.
Beat up anybody.

My cousin should do his work.
Should what?

I know he should.
Do his work.

Now you try. Some of these may not have any answers at all, so if you don't think there is any answer, say so.

(NOTE: From this point on, the field worker must ask the second question based on the informant's answer to the first.)

- A. John can climb a tree; I know he _____.
- B. Doris put it down; I know she _____.
- C. He bigger than me; I know he _____.
- D. If he got a walkie-talkie, he be happy; I know he _____.

- E. Sometime Joseph be up there; I know he ____.
- F. They first-graders; I know they ____.
- G. Dwight been met that girl at that pool; I know he ____.
- H. Those men should work harder; I know they ____.
- I. He be in in a few minutes; I know he ____.
- J. He been a bus driver for ten years; I know he ____.
- K. Sometime my ears be itching; I know they ____.
- L. He been living there a long time; I know he ____.

IV. Question inversion

This time I'm going to give you two sentences, and then you're going to put them together. I'll give you some examples:

John told me this. Roy was going home.
John told me that Roy was going home.

John thinks this. Mary is cute.
John thinks that Mary is cute.

John remembers this. Peter hit his brother.
John remembers that Peter hit his brother.

John told Peter this. Bring a pencil.
John told Peter to bring a pencil.

Now you try it.

- A. John thinks this. Peter is stupid.
- B. John told Raymond this. Go home.
- C. John asked me this. Did the mail come yet?
- D. John knows this. Gary has a bike.
- E. John wonders this. Is there water on the moon?
- F. John wants to know this. Can the boys come over?
- G. John asked him this. Where did they go?

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